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AUTUMN 1933

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ALEXANDER KORDA on THE INTERNATIONAL FILM
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THE SPECTATOR

A YEAR ago *Cinema Quarterly* set out to articulate the desires of the new cinema audience, represented at the one end of the scale by those who appreciate such films as *Don Quixote*, *Maedchen in Uniform*, and *Kameradschaft*, and at the other by those who now go to the cinema to be impressed rather than entertained by films like *Cavalcade* and *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*. To a growing extent it has come to be a forum for the actual makers of films to discuss their problems and search out towards a true understanding of the fundamentals of cinema. In the present number Michael Balcon, who, as production chief of the Gaumont-British studios at Shepherds Bush, has done much to increase the prestige of British films, and John Grierson, whose contribution to documentary is well-known, discuss the function of the producer. In forthcoming numbers the entire structure of the film will be considered from every aspect, by the craftsman as well as by the theorist.

This does not mark a departure from our original policy. In using these pages for an analysis of their medium not only the film-makers will benefit. The spectator will gain an insight into the intricacies of production—the practical consideration of technicalities as well as the abstractions of technique—which will help him towards a fuller appreciation of the new art of the film, which demands both of creator and spectator a greater sensibility and a wider understanding than do any of the older arts. The spectator's point of view will continue to be expressed editorially, and in contributions from representative members of the new cinema public and from men and women distinguished in other spheres.

THE SUB-STANDARD FILM

THE IMPORTANCE of the development of sub-standard film in its various dimensions lies in two directions. On the one hand, though apparatus is admittedly still too dear for the man in the street, it allows the independent producer and groups to experiment along lines uninviting to the commercial film-maker. And on the other it solves, or can solve, the problem of repertory. If all the worthwhile films, after being fully exploited in the theatres, could be reduced to sub-standard dimensions it would be possible to form

private and public libraries, so that the student or any owner of a home projector could obtain and see films which are now finally inaccessible after their commercial exploitation. In education, and for propaganda and advertising, for which purposes sub-standard film is being increasingly used, television might conceivably limit its scope; but for the experimenter its value should remain, and in home projection its position ultimately would be analogous to that of the gramophone in relation to wireless.

It seems to have occurred to few people that the film, like the printed book, is a permanent record. Yet that is one of its main characteristics. That being so, it is reasonable that copies of films should be as readily accessible as books are. The Film Institute includes in its aims the preservation of important films, but if it could organise a scheme for the establishment of repertory film libraries, not necessarily under its own control, it would be doing a work of first-class importance.

EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTION

TO CO-ORDINATE the efforts of those who are seriously engaged in the production of experimental, documentary, and educational films, either on standard or sub-standard apparatus, there has been formed the Independent Film-makers Association, with a board of advisers which includes Anthony Asquith, Andrew Buchanan, John Grierson, Stuart Legg, Paul Rotha, and Basil Wright. If this new and purposive Association can induce the amateur to use his camera to practical ends instead of in idle imitation of Hollywood it should have a considerable influence on the development of the sub-standard market. Its activities will be fully recorded in *Cinema Quarterly*, which will act as its official organ.

THE FILM INSTITUTE

THE SCHEME to form a national Film Institute has probably filled more space in the Press than the Loch Ness monster and the return of the "Ashes" combined, yet there are still countless queries as to the who, the what, and the why of the whole business. Behind the wordy barrage the promoters have gone steadily ahead with their plans, and the British Film Institute, less imposing perhaps than originally conceived, is finally in existence, if not yet operative. From certain quarters there has been all along frank criticism of the scheme, but the critics must now remain silent until it is seen what the new Institute can do, or at least until its plans for imme-

diate action are announced. It is hard to discover exactly what is expected of the Institute, either by the trade or the mixed public of bishops, aldermen, and schoolmasters who have made its establishment possible. It has asked for the co-operation of "all the various sections of the new film movement." Provided its directors display the imagination and leadership their position demands there is little doubt that this will be forthcoming in full measure.

Meanwhile, the film societies movement is steadily growing. Nearly every important city now has its organisation for the exhibition of Continental and artistic films not usually shown by commercial cinemas, and similar societies are now being formed even in quite small towns. A self-satisfied eclecticism may have animated the formation of some of these bodies, but more often the incitement has been a propagandist urge to arouse in others a realisation of the possibilities of the film as an art. The fact that many societies not only give private performances to their members, but support and encourage the public exhibition of worth-while films, organise children's matinées, form study circles and arrange lecture courses, possess libraries of books and stills, and even attempt production, shows the breadth of purpose dictating their activities and proves that they are alive to their responsibilities to the community.

OURSELVES

WITH THIS number *Cinema Quarterly* appears in a new format and at the reduced price of one shilling. This has been done to increase its effectiveness and to reach a still wider public. No apology is needed in asking readers to support this move by making the *Quarterly* known to others and by subscribing or placing a regular order through a bookseller. The friendly co-operation we have received from all quarters during our first year makes us confident that this request will not be made in vain.

Paul Rotha, who as the author of "The Film Till Now" and "Celluloid," needs no introduction to readers, has joined us as London Correspondent. Basil Wright, who acted in this capacity before making plans to go abroad, will continue to be closely associated with us and to contribute regularly.

Correspondents throughout the world will keep readers informed about current events and tendencies abroad to a fuller extent than formerly. Outstanding contributions to early issues will include articles by E. McKnight Kauffer, Ellen Wilkinson, Oliver Baldwin, and Philip Lindsay. For the rest—let this number speak for itself.

NORMAN WILSON.

THE FUNCTION OF THE PRODUCER

1. THE STUDIO PRODUCER

MICHAEL BALCON

*Production Chief of the Gaumont-
British Studios at Shepherds Bush*

THE WORK of the film producer is to determine the choice of subjects, of directors, and of artistes, for every picture, and to decide the cost to be borne. Under his supervision director, scenario editor, and unit executives prepare the script, the plans of sets, and the time schedules for each production. When the film is in the making its daily progress is reported to him. He is the sponsor, and the guide, and the ultimate court of appeal.

A position of this sort, while not without its compensations, must inevitably have its full share of difficulties. The kind of energy which the producer must stimulate and direct is based upon the creative and artistic impulses of directors, writers, camera men, and artistes. Such impulses are so personal that they constantly require the close attention of one directing mind to blend them into the harmonious unity which is essential for any successful achievement in a form of entertainment which depends upon the specialised work of so many different hands.

The history of the cinema shows that every period of successful output is traceable to the producers who have had not only the good fortune to be able to surround themselves with first-rate executives, but who have also had the courage to trust implicitly in the genius of their chosen directors, technicians, and actors.

This division of labour, however, does not absolve him from his personal responsibility. In a large organisation the work of a producer is endless. He must be ceaselessly on the look-out for new ideas and and new methods, without for a moment relaxing his attention from the work in hand, whether it be in the embryo stage of a proposed

scenario, or whether it be the day's "rushes" of the half-dozen productions which are actually on the floor. Again, in a world where competition is so keen, and rivalry friendly or unfriendly is so strong, he must be constantly on his guard, so that his output is not overshadowed by that of others. He must aim all the while at thinking faster than his rivals.

No one realises more clearly than a producer that it is impossible to stand still, and in his efforts to bring something new to the screen he will, within the limits of his vision, see to it that this something new contains the vitalising germ of artistic imagination, of fresh uses of the camera, of a finer and more subtle portrayal of human activities and emotions.

But his judge is ultimately the man in the street. If the work he has been at such pains to accomplish does not please the public he will have failed. It will be useless for him to point out that the productions under his control are supreme works of art. It will not help him to argue that every film for which he has been responsible has shown one step further in the development of the cinema. Let us face the fact frankly. The cinema is an industry as well as an art. The buildings in which the films are made are regulated by the Factory Acts. In them are employed hundred of skilled workmen of every trade. Their output, therefore, will be governed by the conditions that affect every industry. They must find a ready market. Furthermore, as a source of employment, the film industry is a national asset, and the greater its success, the greater its national value. It can only achieve that success by turning out films that will not only repay the money spent on their production, but will also show sufficiently large profits to enable the producer to embark on more ambitious and therefore larger staffed undertakings.

This is not a defence of inartistic productions, nor is it a concession to a low standard of taste. It is just a reminder that the making of films does not go on in the garrets of starvation, where the geniuses of so many arts have eked out their existence to find recognition only after their death.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of the question may be, it is a fact that the cinema is part of the everyday life of more people that have ever read a line of Shakespeare or have ever heard the name of Blake. On the lines of the old parallel that the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link the enlightenment, the intelligence, and the artistic merit of the cinema are bound up with the capacity of its vast public to appreciate those qualities. All this, too, the producer must bear in mind.

It is good for him to have his critics. It is stimulating for him to receive chastisement from the impatient pens of those who are already sufficiently mentally advanced and artistically inspired to point

the way to greater beauty and to richer emotional values on the screen. But they must remember that he must walk in the company of those who are not yet able to run. For a man who, by virtue of his work, is in such close contact with the minds of a great mass of the community, there is no greater folly than to imagine that they are satisfied with just bread and circuses. But whatever he does, he must talk to them in their own language, and not in the language of the academy and of the lecture-room.

The producer, therefore, must remember that he is responsible to the company that employs him for keeping the balance between the industrial or commercial side of film making and the creative or artistic side.

The way of a producer, then, is not easy, and the qualities he must strive after are difficult to attain. The difficult ideal he must set himself is to be as absorbent as a sponge, as indulgent as a father, as hard as steel, and as patient as Job. In an art with unlimited possibilities inspiration may come even from the humblest sources. He can afford to neglect nothing. The material with which he works is not only human but is also artistic. To get the best out of the artist calls for a profound understanding of their psychology. There are times when he must give way, there are more frequent times when he must stand his ground, and he is never free from the necessity of calling upon an infinite resource of patience.

2. THE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCER

JOHN GRIERSON

Producer to the Empire Marketing Board throughout its career

THE PRODUCER'S function is to co-ordinate the more or less worldly intentions of backers with the more or less unworldly intentions of artists. He either finds the money for the artists or the artists for the money: differing in honour according to the direction from which he approaches. Sometimes, if he is ingenious, he carries the reputation among the artists of being an artist himself, and among the backers of being tougher than themselves. Sometimes—this is more frequent—he degenerates into a bully or a sycophant, sent by the money-grubbers to mangle and destroy every decent creative effort whatsoever. Sometimes he more blazingly constitutes himself a racketeer and defence organisation for the artists against the money-grubbers. At his best he is just a plain pandar, serving art as best

he can within the limits set by the high policy of his organisation. This is almost invariably a low policy.

In documentary there is this difference. The producer does not always serve purely commercial interests; unless, that is to say, you take the Marxian point of view, on which all service of the *status quo* is purely commercial. He can give himself the liberal satisfaction of serving such interests as education and national propaganda: which, on any sensible definition, is itself a species of education. Or the producer may act on behalf of a business concern, large enough in its operations and its outlook, to turn publicity into education, and propaganda into a work of development.

In these special fields the producer's function is that of any other head-master. If he does not himself teach, he sees to it that the parents are satisfied. The only difference in the analogy is that the parents in this case are sometimes too scared of films, or too eminently delighted with any and every film, or too eminently cocksure that they know everything about films. The gentry of the studios, like other criminals, have a simple criterion. They look at the balance sheet and sack accordingly. The gentry of education and propaganda face a balance sheet which can be defined in no such exact terms as are to be found in red columns and black. They have to decide not only about immediate effects in a classroom, but about long-range effects on a generation. They are, as a rule (and except for the eminently expert), satisfied with some such instruction as to "bring this, that, or the other thing alive." This is an ideal formula for a producer, and turns him into the knee-wife he ought to be. His main problem is to see that the director does bring this subject alive and not another. For directors tend to diverge.

But perhaps his functions are, in reality, more complicated. Documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly possesses. Theory is important, experiment is important; and every development of technique or new mastery of theme has to be brought quickly into criticism. In that respect it is well that the producer should be a theorist: teaching and creating a style; stamping it, in greater or less degree, on all the work for which he is responsible.

Again, because documentary is new, the sponsors of propaganda and education have to be led gently to a knowledge of what is involved. They will instruct you, as like as not, to get a snap of this, add it to a snap of that, and finish triumphantly with a snap of something else; then wonder why the simple sequence which results is not the world-shaking work of art they intended. In that respect it is well that the producer should know how to talk soothingly to children and idiots.

And a third point. The subject matter for education and propaganda is seldom easy. You are not asked to look for the exciting bits and the exciting themes and shoot these. You are generally asked to hunt about in some seemingly dull subject and find a way of putting it on the screen. The producer's job is, by educational or sociological or other reference, to bring his director to the sticking point. This is the most fruitful part of his work, and is the highest justification of those sponsors of education and propaganda who might, on sloppier theories, be considered a plague to honest artists. It is they who force the pace of documentary cinema and extend its range by the very problems they set. Any fool can make exciting films about exciting things. It is they who, in the end, make documentarians. A producer will recognise this.

But only one thing gives the producer importance: the fact that he makes directors and, through directors, makes art. It is the only thing worth an artist's making: money not excepted. Directors can be no larger than the producer allows them to be, and their films no bigger (except by noble accident) than his own imagination permits. Handling, as he may do, men of different outlooks, different temperaments, he must often, like Chesterton's Knight, ride off in all directions. The feat is difficult but, on occasion, spectacular. It involves faith, hope, and charity for each of his directors, in different degrees; and all at the same time. The most important virtue of these is faith: which is to say, footage. The only secret of good results in documentary is that a director be permitted patience with his subject, and persistence. If these do not work once, you may try him again. You may even try him a third time. But you do not carry experiment to Biblical proportions. Round about the third time you decide you have been a bad producer in picking so bad a director. Or you decide he is a genius outside the scope of your imagination. You fire him, or fire yourself, according to your conscience.

THE CAMERA TURNS ON HISTORY

PHILIP LINDSAY

*Author of the novel "Here Comes the King,"
and responsible for the accuracy of the
historical details in HENRY VIII.*

ROMANCE is coming back into the films. I think that we can now say good-bye to the gangster, the muscular college-boy, the back-chatting show-girl, and the drunken reporter. That phase in films has passed; romance is coming back, and the historical film is returning into its own again. Almost all the great silent successes were costume, and I feel assured that the great talkie successes will be costume. The public wants them; the world, in fact, needs them. We have been pushed up too close to the shoddy, vulgar, and brutal things of to-day; we are tormented by memories of the last war, frightened at the menace of another war; we have gone to the films for relaxation, for inspiration, or for pleasure, and we have returned shocked and a little ashamed of our civilisation. In future, however, we will be shown the great achievements of man in the past; we will see heroic deeds and splendid women, and thus we will be taught that our civilisation is not a crude, sudden growth—not a "system," as the communists, in defiance of history, will call it—but that down the centuries man has been striving forward, building, creating.

The films can teach us this. Instead of degrading man, they can exalt him. I have no time for the young intellectuals, overdosed with psycho-analysis, who, on suddenly discovering that savage impulses remain in our unconscious, persist in believing that those impulses are our whole mind. Man is not a vile creature. Anyone who studies history cannot help being impressed by the rapidity and vitality of his growth. It is not so very long ago since we lived in swamps and knuckled our faces like Rodin's "Thinker," crushed under immense and savage heads, tormented by the birth of dreams beyond knowledge. We have conquered the earth, we are conquering space—all in so amazingly swift a period. Surely our achievement is something of which to be immensely proud?

That is what costume films can make us realise. I am not speaking to the cultured audience, who know these things, and who can watch a gang-war and a wheedling hot mamma with detached amusement; we must not forget that the great film public is often entirely uneducated. To them films are more real than life; to them the speech of actors is something to be mimicked, their gestures something to be copied. I am not a moralist in the usual sense of the word. I detest the idea of a censorship or of any attempt by outsiders to rule life too completely; but I cannot help feeling that, instead of being a power for good, the films have too often been a power for evil. They have taught young girls to expect a swift and ugly seduction; they have taught young men to woo by clipping their wench on the jaw and to have contempt for honesty. How many other finer things they could have taught the world: the simple world, that believes all it sees in newsprint and to whom the films are teachers and leaders!

Costume films, I firmly believe, will bring back a sense of honour and honesty. Instead of lads striving to be Cagneys they will wish to be d'Artagnans; and the women will expect a certain finesse, a certain beauty, about love-making. Costume films will bring colour into life. We have been forced into believing that abstract things like "honour" and "love" are exploded. They may be empty words, but surely a belief in them makes life richer, more beautiful? We need romance terribly to-day. Half our present sense of futility is based on the lack of these old values that man has most carefully formed and treasured for centuries. It is not right that they should be swept aside by machine-gunning gangsters and crude gold-diggers, such as most films have glorified. Of course, we must not blame the films for this loss of values: the causes are too numerous and too well known for me to define them here. And, after all, pictures are the servants of the public and mirror only the passing moods of a generation. If costume films are returning it means that the public demands them; that it is weary of a life that has no meaning beyond a bottle of gin and a few loveless kisses.

Historical novels are coming swiftly into popularity; historical films are coming, too. And this has made me very happy. It is a healthy sign, a sign of renewed vitality. Now we will be shown the past—we will see before us the great achievements of man, the gigantic history of a little creature that has risen from we know not what, who has conquered and enslaved all animals within his reach, who has conquered even the earth itself and the space enclosing the earth. The greatest story in the universe is the story of man. Too long have we been taught to despise ourselves; too long have we been shown only the decaying side of civilisation; now we will be shown its growth. The films will teach us self-respect.

ALEXANDER KORDA

and the

INTERNATIONAL FILM

In an Interview with
STEPHEN WATTS

IN THE midst of the most important forty-eight hours in his career since he became a film producer in Britain, Alexander Korda sat in his Mayfair office and talked to me about the international aspect of film-making.

The time and place were peculiarly appropriate. The previous evening I had stood by Korda's side in the Carlton Hotel while Douglas Fairbanks, senior, and his even more talented junior, discoursed on their plan to remain in Britain and make their future pictures in collaboration with the Korda organisation. They saw no reason why their locale should affect the world-wide appeal their work had enjoyed in the past, which meant that they were crediting Korda with the ability to turn out international films with a consistency never before attempted in this country.

Moreover, the elder Fairbanks made no secret of the fact that a preview of Korda's *chef d'œuvre*, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, had been the deciding factor in clinching his arrangements.

While we talked, Korda had many times to lift the telephone at his side and murmur responses to the verbal bouquets showering in on him from friends who had seen the first showing of the Laughton film the previous evening. Then that night, too, was of importance, because it was going to bring to light another aspect of Korda, the director, in the first screening of his Paris-made comedy, *The Girl from Maxim's*.

I said the place was appropriate to our subject. The office of London Film Productions might well be sub-titled "International House." I am credibly informed that eight languages are in current use among the personnel. From the German conversation between two members of the staff in an ante-room I passed in to be greeted in Hungarian-accented English by Korda, who sat speaking Italian into a telephone.

Looking at this pleasant, pale-complexioned young man in spectacles, it is difficult to believe that he made his first films in Hungary in the first years of the War.

"We did not think much about markets in those days," he said. "The director was usually quite out of touch with commercial considerations and simply made his picture as he saw it.

"Yet in a way that serves to illustrate the most important thing I have to say about what we call 'the international film.' We were Hungarians making Hungarian pictures for Hungarian people. But if we had made a notably good one—and if the world had been at peace—I believe it would have had an appeal anywhere. It would have been characteristically Hungarian and a good film—therefore it would have been international. But you must remember the times in which we were working then.

"The first thing to make me give conscious thought to the problem of international films was when a later film of mine, *The Prince and the Pauper*, made in Vienna, was shown in America. I believe it was the second European film to be seen out of Europe, the first being Lubitsch's *Madame du Barry*.

"Ever since then I have thought in terms of international films and no other. I might put it epigrammatically and say I believe that international films are what good directors make. And though I have made many bad films in my life I always hope to be a good director.

"But perhaps the phrase 'international film' is a little ambiguous. I do not mean that a film must try to suit the psychology and manners of every country in which it is going to be shown. On the contrary, to be really international a film must first of all be truly and intensely national. It must be true to the matter in it.

"The question of speech is not of much importance nowadays. Apart from the growth of multilingual versions, it has been demonstrated that really good films are recognised as such anywhere."

"But," I put in, "there is the question of humour, which is always raised when internationality of films is discussed. Do you think it is possible to have humour that will be understood and will draw laughs in all countries?"

"I think that within certain limitations that is possible," Korda replied. "The limitations are simply little things that any director feels by intuition or knows by experience should be avoided. For instance, while the English may always be relied upon to laugh at themselves—to respond to irony at the expense of the Englishman and his customs—it is useless to hope for a similar response in France by 'taking off' the French, however gently. They do not understand that type of humour. But, generally speaking, I think there are

plenty of humorous situations of which appreciation is unaffected by geographical considerations.”

“When you say that to be international a film must first be national,” I asked, “you do admit that is possible to go to extremes and to be too narrowly national—or even parochial?”

“Certainly. It is not only possible but very easy in making a film which will be characteristic of its place of origin to overstep oneself and become parochial. Sometimes, of course, that type of treatment is desirable—when a film is being made for a specific public which is familiar with and trained to expect a certain style. The Lynn-Walls farces, for instance, could never be called international; but in them that is not a fault. They represent simply the exploitation of a definite brand of comedy for a circumscribed public to whom it needs no explanation. It is a tradition to which they are accustomed. They would resent variation.

“But films based on reality should always have a general appeal if they are good. The American gangster films, to take a simple example, owe their appeal to their fidelity to events with which the world is familiar. They are essentially American in every detail. But when Hollywood tries to make a film with a would-be universal theme, how seldom does anything more than a mere programme picture emerge? In my own case, if I may say so, it is because *The Private Life of Henry VIII* is English to the backbone I feel it will appeal and succeed abroad.

“The question of appreciation is really dependent on this matter of well-defined nationality. If a gangster in an American film is depicted drawing a gun from his hip-pocket, nobody in Britain is likely to object on the grounds that it is not a common practice for Englishmen to carry guns. Similarly with the question of sex treatment. Your French audience is ready for a great deal more frankness and breadth in the statement of a sex situation than the English. But that is no reason why British films with sex themes or incidents should not be enjoyed in France. If anything in the treatment strikes the Frenchman as being prim and proper or discreet to the point of absurdity, by his lights, he will still accept it because it is English—if the whole character of the film is English. But if an English-made film had a *French* story so treated. . . . You see?”

“Could you name one or two outstanding international films which have been essentially national in character, Mr. Korda?”

“Yes. The best American example is probably *The Covered Wagon*. Another was Flaherty’s *Nanook*, which was permeated with the spirit of the North.

“By the way, you mustn’t think that I am suggesting that directors should make nothing but films about their own countries. An outsider often makes the best job of a national film. He is not

cumbered with excessively detailed knowledge and associations. He gets a fresh slant on things. For instance, I should hate to try to make a Hungarian film, while I would love to make one about the Highlands that would be a really national Scottish film—and indeed I plan to do so. The best Hungarian film I have ever seen was made by the Belgian, Jacques Feyder. I believe that Clair could make a better London picture than any of the English directors—a London film that would be international. I know there are people who think it odd that a Hungarian from Hollywood should direct an English historical film, but I can't see their argument.

“The greatest folly is to set out to try to suit everybody. It is the sure road to insincerity and artificiality. The result will be a mongrel film which belongs to no country.”

“Whom do you think are the directors of to-day most capable of making really international films, Mr. Korda?”

“Every good director. But you must make up your mind for yourself which they are. Who am I to say?”

PROVINCIAL REPERTORY

LEEDS IS the first provincial town in Great Britain to have an art film theatre. The Academy, formerly the Savoy, has been opened this month by Erik Hakim and Ralph Bromhead, who plan to make this the first of a chain of provincial repertory cinemas to be run on lines similar to the London Academy, which has had such a remarkable success under the direction of Miss Elsie Cohen. Continuous performances are given daily from 1.30 to 10.30, and the prices of admission range from 1s. to 2s. 6d. The first film to be presented was *Der Traumende Mund*, with Elisabeth Bergner. This will be followed by René Clair's *14th July*.

E. G. Pettet, the manager, states that attendances during the first weeks have been sufficiently good to encourage hopes that the venture will be adequately supported.

THE COLOUR OF IT

PENNETHORNE HUGHES

THE MECHANISATION of entertainment increases constantly in scope and in detail. There are new "mediums" and new forms of these mediums. Usually both forms of novelty are greeted by the serious if rather ineffective criticism of disinterested authorities, as well as by the fulsome praises of their promoters; but one case, that of the colour film, has been overlooked by most of the critics. Dispirited, perhaps, by the odds of vulgarity against them, sober writers, despite the machine-gun rattle of advanced diletantism, the intermittent thunder of literary disapproval, and the discovery by the Sunday newspapers that all that flickers is not gold, have never sufficiently considered the eligibility of this new commercial phenomenon, which is still seeking to smear the world with "All Colour" programmes. It is curious, because talk and colour in films are both aspects of the same increased realism of technique, and whilst one has been discussed *ad nauseam*, the other has been practically passed over. Yet whilst a properly comprehended and controlled colour process might conceivably have good qualities, the present injudicious monstrosities are as extravagantly unsatisfactory as the spate of inferior dialogue which produces such deserved storms of critical repulsion.

Colour in films is not really new. There was a luscious *Siege of Calais* before the War, and films like *The Glorious Adventure* and Fairbanks' *The Black Pirate* were often successful. For years, too, there have existed those parodies of Switzerland and the Rockies, in picture post-card polychromy, which represent a sentimental journey with a camera and a paint-box. Indeed, since the earliest days, most films have been uniformly tinted one shade or another. Cowboys pursued dusty romance against an appropriate yellow; Germans crowded epically upon a meditative grey, Frenchmen gesticulated patriotically through a haze of blue vignetting, and incendiaries internationally succeeded behind palls of luridly crimson

smoke. Individual producers, too, had their tonal prejudices, both before and after the introduction of panchromatic stock. But it was not enough. Now we have the final fling of generous showmanship, when numerous super-productions are afforded the full resources of an ill-assorted spectrum. These glories have long been confined to translated musical comedies, and so have merely emphasised blatancy instead of creating it. Indeed, a few scenes have been improved by colour, and there have been one or two interesting experiments, as, for instance, the coloured cartoon in the *King of Jazz* and the very successfully coloured Silly Symphonies.

Technical considerations are involved. Complete realism is impossible, for the colours of the theatre can be reproduced fairly satisfactorily, but the more subtle gradations of natural scenery cannot. Although this difficulty may be, perhaps is being, overcome, still it is surely commercial suicide to torture "fandom" and to alienate potential but sensitive film-goers with the crudely unintentional distortions of the moment? It is, indeed, doubtful whether man will ever be able physically to appreciate colour in motion, except in the most obvious masses. We can grasp form, and even form in motion, but it is extremely hard to enjoy the composition, as well as the literal content, of colour in motion. Indeed, most people, except the very sensitive or the very unsophisticated, find it more easy to understand even a painting in photographed reproduction than in the canvas. Our colour sense may be developing, our spectrum dividing, but until the retino-cerebral apparatus is far more advanced than it is at present, it is improbable that we shall sensually enjoy coloured films, except for their purely kaleidoscopic characteristics. The kaleidoscope is an abstract of great value as exercise to the æsthete and the technician, but it is training for a form of expression at present immensely difficult to appreciate. It is certainly not the pre-occupation of the producers of super-films.

The manipulation of light and movement is, then, much better controlled in black and white, or any definite monochrome, than in imperfect if triumphant colours. The vociferous yearning for more patter and less art has not altogether deprived us of films with some intelligence of construction and precision of purpose, but these would soon be thinned even more drastically by the adoption of a universal system of colouring. Such a system must, at present, hide form and clarity, making the whole composition less exciting as a continuous pattern, and less convincing as a story, than it would otherwise have been. In fact, colour films are, at the moment, a pronounced mistake.

It is difficult, therefore, to account for the reticence of the more reputable authorities. Are they just frightened or tired, after the terrible hullabaloo about talkies, or suddenly unwilling to enter

into a discussion which must be profitless? For there cannot possibly be a lack of arguments. Recognised forms of monochrome art have always existed: sepia, etching, line drawing, and even sculpture. For coloured sculpture has achieved fashion rarely, and success hardly ever. (The Greeks are no help, as we cannot properly judge what their colours were like, and, at all events, there is the tattered argument of Greek colour blindness.) It is the monochrome forms that have been most easily realised, expressed, and probably understood. This does not, of course, constitute any final argument against the use of colour, but it does tritely underline the fact that the uncoloured film has a separate development no less obvious than the silent film. Even upon the lowest, the "escape" level of argument, consider the verisimilitudinous horrors of dirty reds and foggy yellows. The magnates should beware.

This is only the fringe of an argument about which technicians, cineastes, symposial celebrities, and correspondence columnists will in time clamour in earnest conviction and bad journalism. Only it is strange that they have been so long in starting, and it is desirable that those sincerely interested in the intelligent cinema should consider the æsthetic appropriateness of colour-films before it is too late.

THE FILM IN EDUCATION

THE SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL CINEMA SOCIETY—founded in 1929, with headquarters in Glasgow—has done much experimental and propaganda work in the educational film sphere. Though the classroom film in its varied aspects has been extensively discussed at winter session lectures, the society has been distinguished rather by its practical approach to a problem already somewhat overburdened by investigation. Special classroom films have been prepared and exhibited in Glasgow schools, and the Committee is at present engaged on a scheme of film work which covers the geography of Scotland. During the summer, J. C. Elder, founder of the Society, toured Scotland with a cameraman and covered some three thousand miles in search of material for the *Ideal Cinemagazine* and the *Gaumont Sound Mirror*, much of which will also be used for classroom films. Among the other activities of an enterprising society is the organisation of special matinées for children. The annual subscription is 2s. 6d., and the Hon. Sec. is D. Fraser, 129 Bath Street, Glasgow.

A WORKING PLAN FOR SUB-STANDARD

“EMBFU”

I USE this title because sub-standard production has been too exclusively associated with leisure: with summertime glimpses of children digging in sand pits and other domestic, or would-be domestic, felicities of the personal life. Much of the product of amateur groups, if better in technical degree, belongs to the same category of leisure-time activity. The felicities in this case are the slightly more public, but still very local, felicities of charade. The participants, more often than not, are simply having a good clean time together: seeing themselves act. They are not doing anything especially purposive with their films.

The Preston Film Society made a good little film about electricity a year ago for the local electricity people. The Edinburgh Guild has made a 16 mm. short, with the civic intention of bringing Edinburgh alive. These cases are exceptions. The majority have been pottering about with comedies and dramas, which could not, of course, have any hope of audience outside the family circle.

Some of you may wish to qualify this description of amateur intention, for the phrase “experimental cinema” is often used for these efforts. The suggestion is that behind amateur work there is sometimes the high ambition of making works of art. I think not often, or there would be more documentaries among the amateurs and fewer dramas. By the very nature of the case, the necessary limitations of amateur work (the lack of studio, laboratory, not to mention thespian facilities) make the studio grade far more difficult than the documentary grade. And there is good reason to believe that if the intention were really experimental the amateurs would choose that particular field in which experiment is a practical possibility. We must conclude that the amateurs have been playing themselves.

All this is very well, and I do not raise the matter in a spirit of objection. Cinema, if inferior to golf, is as fair and expensive a way as most of spending Saturday afternoons. It is true, however, that many amateurs would welcome an opportunity of turning their film sense to public uses: and it must be the first job of any movement in the 16 mm. field to outline these public uses and organise their service. This is the thesis of the present article.

Serving a definite end is, among other things, a very important incentive in the making of films: far more important than the vague and almost always false incentive of "making art." It is a good practical axiom that art is never to be got by direct pursuit. It is a trophy obtained, by the grace of one or other of the gods, in the fervent pursuit of something else. In any case, the definite end is a salutary discipline. It dictates the theme. It dictates the treatment. It dictates lucidity and length. It provides an audience and, generally, a critical audience. For all these gifts the amateur should be grateful.

There are two other very important considerations. The definite end may also supply the cash, as happened with the Preston Film Society, the Glasgow educational group, and, I believe, with one of the efforts of the Edinburgh Film Guild. There are other examples to be found in the technical colleges, research laboratories, and the mines and factories. Amateur work has, in such cases, been put on an economic basis. The second important consideration is that the definite end gives amateur film production a growing point. It ties it up with the life of the community and gives it status as a social activity. It supplies the continuing support necessary to development.

Inspiration (continuing inspiration), regarding theme and treatment are not associates, on the more romantic theories, with the cold-blooded purposes of a public end; but, on any evidence, you will find it so. Art, or call it creation, generally involves a mastery of raw material and there is nothing like having the raw material forced upon it. It is then that the imagination has to dig in and find things; and there is no better way of discovering that element of surprise (miracle, call it) which is a necessary quality of art than by taking it from what seems unpromising material.

Anyone knows that birds, trees, hills, lakes, sunsets, etc., are good-looking, and any moron exposing at five-six with a K2 will say as much as need be said about them. But to dive into a factory, or dive into a slum, is a more adventurous business. And to make a good clean job of a teaching film on the Southern Uplands of Scotland is a more adventurous business still. Just to select those twenty or thirty or fifty shots from all the activities involved which will say your say about it, and make it an analytical or poetic or dramatic say, is something that no one has done before you.



Marlene Dietrich as the cabaret singer in "The Song of Songs," a Paramount production, directed by Rouben Mamoulian.

Jessie Mathews in "Friday the Thirteenth,"
a forthcoming Gainsborough picture,
directed by Victor Saville.



You are not asked to seek difficulty for the sake of difficulty or to despise the good subjects which lie to hand. Even the easier and more romantic subjects (spring on the hills, for example) will bear a new and fresh description. The main point is that amateurs should not be ashamed of the subjects which educational or industrial or civic or other propaganda organisations are liable to present to them. It is good to remember that Leonardo, Michelangelo, and El Greco were all paid propagandists.

A consequence of this argument is that purposive amateurs should devote themselves to documentary and be done with it. That is where the educational and propaganda work lies; and, as already suggested, that is where amateur work is likely to find its highest level.

For the sake of convenience it is good to remember the main divisions of documentary work. There are three schools. The first is the newsreel or popular journalist school. It calls its pictures "interest" pictures, because it only takes from the subject what it knows (and any fool will agree) to be interesting. If in the village of Cuckold's Green the parson's whiskers are six inches longer than any other parson's, and the village idiot can waggle his ears faster and wider than any other village idiot, that is its sufficient gambit for a description of English village life. In its more soulful moments it takes to scenics and conjures ham and egg effects from sunsets: red filter, F8 or thereabouts. The second school is the Flaherty school, a deeper affair altogether. It is exotic in its material. It is concerned with native life, native manners, native philosophies, but only with natives who wander on halcyon isles or battle against epic horizons. It does not regard the unemployed of Coatbridge as natives. If it impinges on the modern school it is in *recherche du temps perdu*. It will teach you all you need to know about shooting the simpler communities, and will tell you better than any how to make natural phenomena drape themselves into a continuing story. The third school is represented by Wertov and Turin in Russia, Ruttman in Germany, Ivens in Holland, and by the E.M.B. group and Rotha in Britain. It deals entirely with industrial and modern material. All its films are made under educational or propaganda auspices, and are so financed. Its method of treatment varies. It is sometimes impressionist, sometimes symphonic, sometimes analytical; but it avoids both the personal story and the discursive. It is concerned to build up mass descriptions and build a theme out of its sequence of mass descriptions. On the technical side it deals in tempos, rhythms, images. Deprived of the journalistic reference of the newsreel method and the romantic appeal of the Flaherty method, it is concerned to find the sociological implications of its subject matter.

Amateurs should master carefully the theories of the different schools. They will provide a necessary academic grounding and prevent a great deal of lost labour and enthusiasm. In so far as amateur work is directed to public uses, the Flaherty example will be found useful in some cases (for Travel Association purposes, for example); but in the main the modern school will be found more useful. Here you must watch carefully, for these tempos and rhythms and things are all too theoretically fascinating and at the level of discussion all too "arty" for practical guidance. They may easily land you in abstract sequences which are anything but purposive in their total effect. They are, after all, only the means by which you make your material interesting: they do not of themselves create a theme or story for that material. Even in documentary the play's the thing. Or, as the case may be, the lesson, the message, is the thing. Indeed there is now some considerable sign that the more complex documentary effects (as in *Berlin*, for example) are passing out of favour. A simpler, quieter, less "musical" and more purposive treatment is taking its place.

Where the tale is a simple one, better tell it and let the effects look after themselves, and not vice versa. This will both recommend you to your educational or industrial or civic sponsors and give you a first right step towards effective work. Amateurs, when they are ambitious, tend to be too ambitious by half. When they turn professional, it takes two years to de-theorise and decomplicate them. They are too proud to be simple. This is spoken from laborious experience.

Such advice in hand, what are the direct possibilities? In the first place, there is a vast "bringing alive" service to be performed: a very valuable line of approach to development associations, city councils, steamship companies, travel associations. They all want to see their particular blob of territory alive and kicking on the screen, and there is no reason why the amateurs should not do it for them. They can do it cheaper than professionals and may often, with local knowledge, local enthusiasm, and a higher critical understanding of cinema, do it better. Many sections of the country: villages, counties, industrial communities, seaside resorts, stretches of mountain and coast, hiking circuits, have their descriptive story to tell; and there are traders' organisations, civic organisations, to whose interest it is that the story should be told. The rest is a matter of business, and every amateur group should have a member who can do business. The number of 16 mm. projectors in schools and lecture organisations of all kinds will indicate the growing audience available for this type of material. *It may even be shot on 35 for the wider audience 35 mm. commands; 35 can always be reduced for 16 mm. circulation.*

The educational service is an even more promising service and one I recommend very strongly to any amateur group with a sprinkling of pedagogic membership. It has present examples in the work at Altrincham under Gow and at Glasgow under the Director of Education, with J. C. Elder in charge of practicals. The Glasgow amateur group has set itself a programme of teaching films for the Glasgow curriculum, joining up thereby their film work with their professional work. Every other major educational authority requires a similar scheme, and amateur groups should press themselves into their service. Curricula differ across the country, and it is good that they should. Indeed, no matter what films are forthcoming from London libraries they cannot hope to fulfil local requirements. Directors of education are sensitive on this point and will listen to you. Be careful, however, to concentrate on local requirements, or you may be cutting across the production plans of the production centres in London which will, necessarily, be dealing with the wider themes. The educational film field cannot yet afford any tendency to overlapping.

A third line of approach will be found in connection with local hospitals and departments of public health. The churches and Y.M.C.A.s with their various youth services and women's services will suggest still another line. The publicity required by industrial concerns, both inside and outside the factories, suggests yet another. There is really no limit to the clients available to 16 mm. groups, if they will but switch their attention to the many possibilities inside educational and social work.

Only one warning is necessary. They will have to prove the availability of an audience, before they can raise money for their efforts. In the educational field, and in cases where films are made for use by salesmen or for showing to employees, there is, of course, no difficulty. In other cases the 16 mm. groups will have to indicate distribution either through existing libraries, or through their own central organisation. There is every sign in London that, if the films are available, audiences will be found on a national scale. Audiences on local scale can be left to the devices of the local groups. They will not have learned their job as film people, if they cannot publicise their wares.

THE FILM ABROAD

FRENCH MOVIE TO-DAY

D. F. TAYLOR

THE INFLUENCE of the stage lies heavy on French movie. In no country, save perhaps Japan, are the traditions and practice of the stage so deeply embedded in the producer's mind. With what gusto they announce an actor who is from the *Comédie Française*! The music-hall also has a considerable influence, and the Leslie Fuller and Ernest Loting tradition is very closely paralleled in the French programme picture. Technically, however, they are far behind Britain. Cutting is even less appreciated at Joinville than at Elstree. The tempo of films is dull and demonstrates a lack of movie sense. The stage has had its influence in a superabundance of dialogue. A shot of five hundred feet, in which the confines of the screen become the sides of a stage, is not uncommon. But in set design, and costume they excel, and though the stories are bad and the method of telling them crude, there is very rarely anything offensive to eye or ear. The French have a greater sensibility than any other nation. Certainly their artistic sense is much better developed. Perhaps the roots of this can be found in the higher standard of education.

The experimental cinema that was such a vital and interesting part of French movie has almost passed away. The men who thrilled the days of our film adolescence with *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *En Rade*, *La Petite Lise*, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Le chien Andalou*—where are they now? . . . The *ci-devant* intellectuals have sold their souls down the Champs Elysées. Cavalcanti, Dréville, Feyder, Epstein, L'Herbier, are all working in the factories at Joinville turning out the programme picture. The only one who has carried any of his virtues to Joinville is Epstein, the erstwhile protagonist of French documentary. His last film shown publicly, *Hispano*, did show some feeling for people and a nice sense of timing. He managed to obtrude a lighthouse to give it the Epstein signature. Cavalcanti is making *Coralie et Cie*, in

which Catherine Hessling has a small part. Jean Dréville, documentary producer, turns *Trois per cent*. Eugene Deslaw, one of the earliest abstract film-makers, is among the few who have resisted the lure of the Big Time. He is making a documentary of *La Cité Universitaire*. In an interview he said: "I was tired of the world, with its depressions and crises. It held no hope. But here among the young students I have found gaiety, health, and optimism, a belief in ideals. That is the spirit of my film." It will carry neither dialogue nor spoken commentary. Titles will be used with a musical commentary, a synthesis of national songs typifying the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this university.

René Clair, silent for so long, has been working on a shooting script for a new film based on his own story. Conditions of the story and the wishes of Tobis decided the making of the picture in Berlin. Unfortunately under the Nazi regime certain regulations had to be complied with and Clair was asked to make modifications to the film. He refused, and temporarily the film has been shelved. In an interview with *Comædia*, Douglas Fairbanks said that he hoped Clair would direct a picture for his new company. Nothing has developed, and Clair is still idle. It is difficult to assess his position to-day. Over a year has passed since *A Nous la Liberté*. In that film he demonstrated his lack of social consciousness and his inability to face a social problem. Instead he produced a vague Rousseauesque philosophy. Unless Clair can show us that he is willing to tackle social themes, his films will remain as they always have been, pleasant exercises in movie technique. *Sous les Toits de Paris* was his best film, because he was definitely interested in the lives of people at that time. Unquestionably he is the best producer in France, but we want to know how he is facing up to the new problems, what use he is making of new ideas, and most importantly, whether he will remain a producer of burlesque and musical comedy or whether he has the courage to face movie themes.

The most sizeable figure working in France to-day is V. I. Tourjansky. You will remember him as an unambitious producer of such pictures as *Volga-Volga* and *The White Devil*. He has learnt a lot since then and his latest picture, *L'Ordannance*, puts him in the front rank. It is adapted from a de Maupassant story and has been directed with a magnificent economy of shots giving it the starkness of real drama. In the middle the film tends to lose balance, too much emphasis being laid on matters immaterial to the logical development of the story. Music has been very skilfully woven into the film in a symbolic but never obtrusive fashion. Tourjansky will do even bigger things when he ceases to use his camera truck in a pointless manner and when he can curb his embarrassing tendency to overemphasise the mood of a scene with symbolical settings. The

period is about the time of *Nana*, an atmosphere the French know so well how to recreate. Miss Cohen of the Academy tells me it may be shown in England. It is the best sound film exposition of the naturalistic approach to cinema.

The Nazi persecution of the German film producers is likely to benefit the French cinema. Lang, Pommer, Pabst, Ophuls, and a host of others are working in Paris. It is too early yet to see any of the films they are making, but the grafting of German technique on the French school will certainly create films of interest. The introduction of the German technicians will undoubtedly improve the technical deficiencies of the French cinema. How the film melting-pot will assimilate the French *esprit* and the German soul exploration is a matter for conjecture. Preserve us from introspective musicals or comedies of the subconscious!

AMERICA

LEWIS JACOBS, who already has to his credit *Mobile Composition*, *Commercial Medley*, and a four-reel documentary of the Southern States, has now completed *City Block*, which is described as "a film of violence." It is a close-up of a metropolitan block emphasising cinematic technique rather than photographic quality. Sound is used in counterpoint to image and not as exposition. The content is entirely documentary. All sorts of ruses were resorted to in order to photograph the people without their knowledge. A naturalness and naïvete, which can only be achieved in this way, is the result.

AN INTIMATE little cinema, seating 280, luxuriously furnished and decorated in the modern manner, is about to be opened in Baltimore by Hermann G. Weinberg, whose policy is to show only European films and those American films which because of their artistic merit (when they occur!) cannot get a release through the larger houses. Among the films it is hoped to show during 1933-34 are *Atlantide*, *Don Quixote*, *Mirage de Paris*, *M*, *Poil de Carotte*, *The Merry Monarch*, *Ariane*, *A Nous la Liberté*, *July 14*, *Fin du Monde*, and *The Deserter*.

PRIOR to *The Face of New England*, Henwar Radakiewicz made two films: *The Barge*, a documentary, shot entirely on a tugboat; and *Portrait of the Artist*, also a documentary. In both of these, Radakiewicz achieved striking photographic effects. *The Face of New England* furthers the melodramatic quality of his photography. The film is divided into four moods: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. The particular atmosphere and detail of New England environs is inter-

preted in its seasonal flux. Radakiewicz works with great patience to obtain exact photographic values. Almost a full year has been spent on the picture and only half of it has been completed. If it is mounted as well as it is photographed, *The Face of New England* will undoubtedly be an important contribution to film art.

LEWIS JACOBS.

GERMANY

THE GERMAN cinema as the world knew it can no longer be said to exist. The studios have been "purged" of "non-Aryans" and those who do not support the Nazi regime, and such international figures as Erich Pommer, G. W. Pabst, Joe May, Paul Czinner, and Fritz Lang, are now in exile. Others, such as Emil Jannings, Werner Krauss, Marlene Dietrich, and Lilian Harvey are at present abroad and are likely to be affected by a new decree which will exclude from working in Germany all who make contracts to go abroad or who renew their present contracts outside of Germany—thereby "retarding the work of cultural reconstruction."

THE NEW German films are undisguised Nazi propaganda. *Horst Wessel* glorifies the achievement of a Nazi student who was killed by Communists in 1930 and has since been made something of a national hero, while *S.A.—Mann Brand*, which undoubtedly has considerable entertainment value, shows the Communists, characterised as Jews, as the enemy of the people, represented by the Storm Troops. *Fugitives*, directed by Gustav Ucicky, is an attack on Bolshevism and deals with the fate of the Volga Germans who fled out of Russia at the Revolution.

BELGIUM

GERMAINE DULAC, well-known as a producer of *avant garde* films, is now Art Manager of Gaumont News Reel, of which there is a Belgian supplement. Charles de Keukelaire, director of *Combat de Boxe* and *Lourdes*, is in charge of the photography.

MAURICE DEMBRAIN has made a folklore film of the Ath Fair—*La Danse des Géants*—which endeavours to bring out the curious rhythm of the popular feasts and the reaction they create on the people. The Belgian cinema appears to be turning in a decidedly national direction.

L. P.

MISCELLANY

ADAPTATION: AN EXAMPLE

CLIFFORD LEECH

WHEN *The Merry Monarch* was withdrawn from the London Empire after one day's showing, the blame was thrown on the sedulity of Mr. Shortt. No doubt the English copy suffered from his attentions, yet there was in it so much falseness and stupidity that we must be allowed to question whether the original had ever anything more to recommend it than an intermittently pleasant air of bawdry.

Pierre Louys' novel, *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole*, introduces us to the country of Tryphème, where complete sexual liberty is established. King Pausole, however, is a prey to indecision, and has therefore assigned the control of his household to the puritanical Taxis. The story tells how the Princess Aline leaves the court with Mirabelle, a Lesbian, and how Pausole sets forth in search of her. The rule of Taxis is successfully challenged by the page, Giglio, and Pausole is at last convinced that freedom must be the property even of his wives and daughter.

The novel has its niche in literature as a picture of licentiousness carried to its logical conclusion and as a setting for the genuinely and humanly amusing character of Pausole. The film of *The Merry Monarch* has neither logic nor characterisation. It is worth considering here only because of its "artistic" pretensions.

Four notable changes are made in the screen translation:

(1) Mirabelle is, inevitably, no longer a Lesbian; yet she unnecessarily appears on about three occasions. There are other discrepancies of this kind, and at least one serious gap in the narrative. Presumably the censor has been at work, but if the film were deemed worth showing in its cut version, then it would also have been worth while to refashion it as a coherent unity.

(2) Giglio has become an aviator who discovers the land of Tryphème. This was a happy invention, for it could make him a



Conrad Veidt in the "Wandering Jew,"
a Twickenham Films production.
Still photograph by Cyril Stanborough.

Anna Neagle in "Bitter Sweet," a British and Dominions screen version of Noel Coward's play, directed by Herbert Wilcox. The film is notable for the photography of Fred Young and the set design of L. P. Williams.



representative of the audience, delighted with the principles of this new country, and demanding that they should be universally applied. His character, however, is ruined by the attempted serious delineation of his love affair with Aline.

(3) At the end of the film, Pausole announces his conversion to monogamy through the ministrations of Queen Diane! (This is after Pausole and Diane have been lost at sea, being unable to locate Tryphème because it does not appear on any of the world's maps. An interesting addition, but introduced and disposed of far too perfunctorily.)

(4) The indecision at the basis of Pausole's character is nowhere hinted at, and the domination of Taxis becomes immediately ridiculous. The king of *The Merry Monarch* is merely a *bon viveur*; the king of *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole* is the one character in the book who is created in the reader's own image. The puppet-performances that come from English and American, and now German, studios make us more than ever willing to see a film of human character. Here was a great opportunity.

For the last three of these changes the censor cannot be held responsible.

The Merry Monarch has been praised for the agreeable patterns of its camera-work, but the director has apparently no eye for significant detail. His obtuseness in this respect is revealed notably in the flat filming of the ballet: not a single detail is brought out by camera position or angle. An attention to significant detail, however, presupposes a respect for one's subject-matter. And it seems impossible that anyone could feel respect for the mixture of crudity and conventionality that is *The Merry Monarch*.

THE POET AND THE FILM

G. F. DALTON

I SHOULD be very grateful to Herbert Read for a little further explanation of some points in his article, "The Poet and the Film."* In the first place, I am not quite sure what he means by the word "poet." In one context it seems to have its original sense of "maker" or creative artist in general; in another it seems to be confined to those who compose verse. This ambiguity has an important effect on Mr. Read's conclusion, "The film of imagination . . . will not come until the poet enters the studio." If he uses the word "poet"

* *Cinema Quarterly*, Summer 1933.

in its first meaning, this sentence is reduced to, "The film of imagination will not come until creative imagination is used in its making," which is very nearly a truism. If by "poet" he means the maker of verse, or even of literature generally, several other interesting points are raised.

There seems to be no particular reason why the sentence quoted above should not run, "The film of imagination will not come until the musician enters the studio"; or the painter; or the sculptor. Mr. Read says that literature is visual; but is not this at least equally the case with painting and sculpture?

But let us examine this contention a little more closely. Mr. Read says that the "single aim" of literature is "to convey images by means of words." In that case, other things being equal, the more clearly and accurately the visual image is expressed, the better is the description as literature. This is a rather remarkable conclusion. Thus, for example, when Milton wrote, "On his crest sat horror plumed, nor wanted in his grasp what seemed both spear and shield," he was writing very bad poetry, for he described things quite impossible to visualise. Thus, numerous sonnets of Shakespeare, large parts of Milton and Wordsworth, and many others, are not poetry at all, for they make no attempt at all to convey images, but are concerned with reflection or philosophy. Thus, Walter de la Mare, when he wrote, "Dusk on the windless casement weaves a labyrinth of flowers," would have been much better advised to express himself in some such manner as this: "C.U. of the casement from inside. Dusk is falling outside, and the evening is perfectly calm. In speeded-up motion, frost-patterns (back-lit by the remains of light outside) appear on the window-panes."

At this point Mr. Read will doubtless interpose that, although my scene from an imaginary film scenario is clear and accurate, it is not vivid; it does not immediately call up in the mind the image it describes, but the mind has, of its own volition and with some effort, to construct the image. To this I reply that vividness is not its business; and, therefore, that even according to Mr. Read's definition the scenario is not literature. But if the scenario is not literature, how can the film have any connection with literature? "To convey images," according to Mr. Read, is the object of literature; it is also, in a somewhat different sense, the object of the scenario; but it is certainly not the object of the film. The film is the images, and they stand in need of no conveyance except a purely physical one. If literature uses words to convey images, the film uses images to convey whatever lies behind them. But in that case the conveyance of images is not an end in itself, and therefore literature is merely the film at second-hand.

According to Mr. Read's definition, then, it seems that Homer

and Shakespeare and all the rest have been merely composing scenarios for unproduced films, and that the invention of the film camera must eventually abolish literature altogether. This seems to me to be an unsatisfactory position.

Another point on which I would welcome a little further enlightenment is his definition of technique. Beethoven began composing at the age of eleven, and his technique, according to all the best authorities, was continually progressing up to within a few years of his death. But Mr. Read says that most techniques can be learnt in a few days, or at most in a year or two. We can hardly assume that Beethoven was unusually slow-witted, so that Mr. Read must be using the word "technique" in a different sense. Indeed, this must be so, for he speaks as if there was only one technique for each art. Yet one says, for example, that Manet's technique differs from Picasso's, as if each artist had a technique of his own. I should be greatly obliged to Mr. Read if he would assist me here. But in any case, Mr. Read's statement that "no amount of technical efficiency will create a work of art if the imaginative genius is lacking," proves nothing; for it is equally true that no amount of imaginative genius will create a work of art if the technical efficiency is lacking.

With the exception of these few points I am in complete agreement with Mr. Read's article.

HERBERT READ REPLIES

I AM very grateful to Mr. Dalton for giving me an opportunity of making myself clearer on one or two points in my rather impromptu article on "The Poet and the Film"—it was originally delivered as a speech. I do, of course, use "poet" in the wider sense, and not merely as a maker of verse. This may reduce my observation to a truism, but I think there is a distinction to be made between poetic imagination or fancy and what I would call prosaic ingenuity or invention, and my only purpose in using the rather doubtful word "creative" was to imply this distinction. Once that distinction is admitted, I think there is some sense in saying that "the film of imagination . . . will not come until the poet enters the studio."

As for the next point, I confess that the word "single" is unfortunate. What I should have written was "primary" or "elementary." The elementary aim of writing is to convey images, and this elementary aim remains a very essential one—even in verse, where so many other complications enter into the question, including not only verbal music but even legitimate effects of confused imagery, as in Milton's metaphor. Just as poetry has elaborated this

elementary aim during the many centuries of its development, so, no doubt, the film will elaborate its elementary aim—which is, nevertheless, still the same as the aim of poetry—to convey images, but by visual and not aural means. The distinction Mr. Dalton tries to draw between the scenario and the film is surely irrelevant, as though we were to try and distinguish between the words of the poem and the images they express.

I am not so sure that Homer and Shakespeare and all the rest did not compose scenarios for unproduced films, but the fact that their scenarios are, incidentally, literature should relieve Mr. Dalton of any anxiety he feels for the future of literature.

My remarks on technique were perhaps a little extreme, but I did guard myself by saying “most” techniques, and whilst that might include everything, from learning to ride a bicycle to producing a film, it might still exclude Beethoven. The sense in which I use the word “technique” is the strict one. To speak of Manet’s technique as differing from Picasso’s, or of each painter having a technique of his own, is merely an inexact use of the word. In such cases it is not the technique that differs, but the use made of it.

CINEMA’S INFLUENCE ON PHOTOGRAPHY

“THE MOVIES,” says E. O. Hoppé, in his introduction to *Modern Photography* 1933–34 (London: Studio. 7s. 6d.), “have saved photography in spite of itself!” Bromoil, gum-platinum, soft-focus, and all the technique imitative of the painter’s art have vanished. At last the legitimate sphere of photography has been recognised, and the current volume is exciting evidence of the vigour and effectiveness of pure photography. The camera eye differs from the human both in range of vision and mensuration of perspective, and it is the exploitation of these differences in revealing the hidden beauty of the commonplace that gives the new realism its artistic authenticity. Imagism, mastery of technique, and absence of sentimentalism are the keynotes of the collection, which contains examples from all over the world. Can it be a still latent sentimentalism, however, which prolongs the life of the professional model and the carefully posed “artistic studies in the nude” which appear even in this volume?

Though beautifully produced with the Studio’s customary care it is a pity all the photographs did not receive the full value of black and white instead of being printed in various tints.

N. W

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

FORSYTH HARDY

FOR THE first time, it seems, British production is the most interesting and important of the quarter. Alike in promise and performance the news is imposing. Douglas Fairbanks has decided to make London his headquarters for future film production and his move, which is to be followed by other notable screen personalities, is a further indication of the decline of Hollywood and the growing importance of Britain as a world film centre. The films to be produced in this country in alliance with London Film Productions and distributed in America through United Artists will inevitably add to the prestige of the British film abroad. There is great promise also in the new Gaumont-British programme: *Red Ensign*, a story of the shipyards, is being designed as a tribute to the Merchant Service; *Northbound* is to describe the life of the men who sail in the Arctic; *Cecil Rhodes* will give an impression of Empire building; *Men Without Work* will, plainly, have a social theme; and *Mary Queen of Scots* will make an interesting contribution to the growing group of historical pictures. With projects such as these announced, the progress of the British film becomes something to be followed with lively expectation.

In performance also Britain's record is worthy of more note than usual. Victor Saville's *I Was a Spy* and Alexander Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII* are definite achievements. In addition to the latter film, Korda has made *The Girl from Maxim's*, a witty adaptation of a lighthearted French farce, with lovely photography by Georges Périnal. *Bitter Sweet*, while not adding anything to the stage version, is distinguished by its pictorial quality and its sense of showmanship. And the growing enterprise of British producers is represented by *The Fire Raisers* by Michael Powell, brought to the screen while its theme is still front page news.

Two film cycles have developed during the quarter. There has been a tendency in the studios to look backward into history for film themes. In addition to *Henry VIII* we have seen *Voltaire*, a film innocent of real historical sense and interesting only for the performance of George Arliss; and we are promised, among others, *Mary Queen of Scots*, *Catherine the Great*, *Queen Christina*, *Napoleon*, and *Nell Gwynne*. If all of those pictures are as sincere and successful as the *Henry VIII* film cinemas will benefit in colour and glamour from this renewed interest in the past. A cycle of movie-revues which opened with the excellent *Forty-Second Street* has continued with *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Moonlight and Melody*, and others are in production. There is a regrettable tendency in these new movie-revues to make capital of the depression. Two of them are almost identical in their final numbers, and both, with equal lack of taste, have the American unemployed worker and the "bread line" as their theme. One is called *Dusty Feet* and the other *Forgotten Man*.

America's cinema of the quarter has followed familiar lines. *Dinner at Eight* and *Tugboat Annie* are exaggerated products of the star system. *Another Language* and *Accidents Wanted* reveal a continued dependance on the stage for material. *Song of the Eagle*, *The Mayor of Hell*, and *The Stranger's Return* are variously typical of the American movie's close contact with national life.

Apart from Laurel and Hardy, whose methods are growing familiar, the comedians have been strangely silent, and we have heard nothing from Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, Jimmy Durante, and the Marx Brothers. There is news, however, of Chaplin. Not only is he making a new film, but he is planning to make a talkie version of *The Woman of Paris* and numerous short films. It is good to know that Chaplin is working again; it will be better when we see the name of his new film in lights above the theatre.

Meanwhile there have been few foreign films. From Germany came *Zwei Menschen*, a tragedy set in the Tyrol, adapted from a novel by Richard Voss and directed by Eric Waschneck. And from the Soviet studios came *Twenty-Six Commissars*, a historical impression of the Russian revolution as it affected Baku. The latter film has not yet been shown publicly.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII.

Production: London Films. Direction: Alexander Korda. Story and Dialogue: Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis. Photography: Georges Périnal. Art Direction: Vincent Korda. With Charles Laughton, Robert Donat, Lady Tree, Binnie Barnes, Elsa Lanchester, Merle Oberon, Franklin Dyall, Wendy Barrie. Distribution: United Artists.

The title is important. When it is not the aim of the film to give an impression of England during the momentous years of the Reformation we cannot find fault with it for not having done so. This is the private life of Henry VIII. It would have been a greater and possibly more memorable achievement had the film attempted to convey England's growing greatness during the Tudor period; but national epics, despite *Cavalcade*, are not always the most profitable box-office propositions, and the lesser and safer task of popular entertainment was preferred. While we may regret the choice in the face of so great an opportunity, we must recognise the film's unqualified success within the limits of its title.

Having elected to entertain rather than to inspire, London Films did not consequently reject sincerity or ignore historical fact. True there are anachronisms and irreverencies which those who like to play the game of catch-as-catch-can will discover; but these are incidentals and do not affect the convincing historical atmosphere of the film. Never do we think of Henry and his Court as mere characters in a charade; and pointed references, among others, to the King's foresight in building a huge fleet for England which was later to triumph over the Armada, and the threat of his revenge on Cromwell following his first meeting with the unattractive Anne of Cleves, keep the historical sense keen. The film is composed chiefly of episodes describing the wooing, wedding, and dismissal of Henry's wives, though it omits Katherine of Aragon whose influence on Henry's life is brushed aside in a sub-title, and it only hints at the important part played by Anne Boleyn. Jane Seymour of whose ignorance Henry is agreeably tolerant; Anne of Cleves whose dowdy, gawky person he acutely dislikes, though he comes later to respect her intelligence; and Katheryn Howard whose youthful beauty attracts him until her deception is proved, are more generously described; and the film concludes with Henry, incredibly transformed from vigorous manhood to senility in a few years, submitting complacently to the nagging and cosseting of Katherine Parr. One of the finest and most revealing moments in the film is his reception of the news of Jane Seymour's death after the birth of Edward VI.

Not surprisingly the film is made memorable by Charles Laughton's

immensely powerful if provocative portrait of Henry. Accurately, I think, he shows the Tudor King to be a man of profound egotism, with personal motives always underlying his public actions, yet with sufficient cunning to stop short of tyranny. It is more the emphasis of the script than of his performance that makes prominent Henry's selfishness, cruelty, ingratitude, and sensuality; and the grossness of the King's manners, though startling to our generation, is doubtless true to the period. Laughton's performance, easily the finest of his brief screen career, dominates the work of an able cast of whom we would like to have seen more: in particular of Merle Oberon as Anne Boleyn, Elsa Lanchester as the Ugly Duchess from Germany, and Robert Donat as Culpeper.

In technique the film is the most polished and workmanlike yet produced in this country. The expert hand of the artist and craftsman is evident everywhere, from the beautiful photography of Périnal to the smallest detail in the costumes designed by John Armstrong. Korda's direction is a remarkable feat of controlled construction. From so many diverse elements he has created a film which, if inevitably episodic in development, has a distinctive and compelling unity. *The Private Life of Henry VIII* gives Korda an assured place among the important directors in contemporary cinema.

F. H.

I WAS A SPY

Production: Gaumont-British. Direction: Victor Saville. Scenario: W. P. Lipscomb. Photography: Charles van Enger. Art Direction: Alfred Junge. Editing: Fred Smith. With Conrad Veidt, Madeleine Carroll, Herbert Marshall, Gerald du Maurier, Edmund Gwenn, Donald Calthrop.

When a picture evokes almost unanimous praise from the popular writers, I always feel that we should approach the gilded shrine on bended knees. True, Gaumont's new *opus* has not been likened unto a "mountain peak dominating the surrounding landscape," yet I think it might well be described as a bump impeding the traffic of the Strand. We have been asked so many times by our Sunday papers to give the Gaumont boys a big hand that it must have become a habit with we poor writers, but I must confess that Saville's new picture brought me up with a jerk in my seat. Let me describe it.

The story is taken from the adventures of Mlle. Marthe Cnockaert, a Belgian, who nursed German wounded in the small market town of Roulers during 1915, for which duties she was awarded the Iron



Marlene Dietrich as the ingenuous model in "The Song of Songs," a Paramount production, directed by Rouben Mamoulian. Whatever the film's faults—they are largely atoned for by the beautiful photography of Victor Milner.



From "The Rebel," directed by Luis Trenker and Edwin Knopf for Universal. A period film set in the Austrian Tyrol.

Cross. Whilst thus engaged, she was persuaded to undertake espionage work on behalf of the British, causing cylinder dumps to be blown up and sending information which led to Allied aircraft bombing German troops at prayer. At length, her duplicity (or heroism, according to taste) was discovered by the Town Kommandant, but she contrived to avoid the extreme penalty by amazing good fortune. Such is the material from which the film scenario is constructed, with suitable additions in the form of a love-interest and a bawdy week-end at Brussels.

Here we tread carefully. As was expected, there is no attempt to show the unvarnished truth of war nor even its stupidity. The cause of wars is assiduously ignored, and from this view point the picture has no social value. But, acutely self-conscious of his difficult theme, Saville has laid the guilt of war barbarity equally with each conflicting army. The Germans employ poison gas in the field while the British drop bombs on their enemies at prayer. So far, so good. Among the opening titles, however, is a prefatory note by no less a worthy than Winston Churchill, from which we gather that the job of a spy is gallant, courageous, and heroic, enlisting at outset our sympathy for Marthe and "her side." I wonder if that same tribute would have been included had Martha been of English nationality, for only recently it was proclaimed from every rooftop that no Englishman, or was it Briton, could be guilty of espionage. This apart, a final note of patriotism is struck in the closing sequence when the British occupy the evacuated Roulers and Miss Carroll's face lights up with ecstatic joy as the pipers lead the procession. We cry "For England and the Right."

Technically, there is much to offend if reckoning be made of the picture's cost. Saville's camera approach is frank and industrious, the set-ups being chosen on pictorial rather than dramatic context grounds. When his camera drops low, I failed to observe its significance. Admittedly, he has not been aided photographically. The presentation of the Roulers set built at Welwyn Garden City does not do justice to its architect. The long shots are grey and poorly exposed. The marching of troops is dull and repetitive. Of cutting for dramatic import I noticed little, but deplored the constant use of wipe-dissolves to cover the weak continuity. The direction of players seemed uncontrolled. Veidt assumed his usual dominance. Carroll tried bravely, sometimes looked attractive, but broke down before Veidt's superiority. Nevertheless, she remains perhaps England's only intelligent woman star. Marshall was not permitted to forget his canopy value, and the part might well have been given to a lesser-known player. Of the smaller rôles, I have nothing but praise, except that Calthrop's barnstorming methods are becoming tedious.

And so I raise my hat to Gaumont for attempting a film of serious stature, but replace it when I see the spirit in which the deed is done.

PAUL ROTH.

THE SONG OF SONGS

Production: Paramount. Direction: Rouben Mamoulian. From the play by Edward Sheldon and the novel of Hermann Sudermann. Photography: Victor Milner. With Marlene Dietrich, Brian Aherne, Lionel Atwill, Alison Skipworth. Distribution: Paramount.

Rouben Mamoulian must be one of the most versatile directors at present working in Hollywood. His *Applause* made most of the early back-stage films appear amateurish. *City Streets* saw him give an imaginative account of gangsterdom when the last word appeared to have been said on the gangster. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* made a memorable addition to movie horror. In his last film, *Tell Me To-night*, he surprisingly turned his back on realism and successfully created an atmosphere of fantastic romance. Now he has made *The Song of Songs*, a tender, romantic story with not a trace of the satire found in his earlier work. This is not the great film which one day he will make; but the tenderness of the treatment and the depth of understanding revealed make it outstanding.

In its essentials the story is familiar. To quote a trade paper review, it tells of a "young country girl's love for sculptor, her disillusionment, marriage to wealthy Baron, and tragic consequences of meeting with former lover." But under Mamoulian's direction, these familiar elements are transformed and the film becomes a sincere and sensitive study of a woman's love and suffering. Through a film whose pictorial composition is consistently lovely there runs a note of symbolism which is most noticeably evident in the climax when the girl, disillusioned, degraded, and her simple faith distorted, smashes the statue made of herself when first she met and fell in love with the sculptor.

In Mamoulian's hands Marlene Dietrich gives the performance of her career, achieving through restraint an impressiveness seldom achieved in her former films. She is here not a vague, glamorous creature, but a woman capable of love and understanding. In comparison, the performances of the others appear dry and spiritless.

F. H.

ZOO IN BUDAPEST

Production: Fox. Supervision: Jesse L. Lasky. Direction: Rowland V. Lee. Photography: Lee Garmes. With Loretta Young, Gene Raymond, and O. P. Heggie. Distribution: Fox.

This is one of the best films to come from Hollywood this year and an indication of new production ideas in the Fox studios in Hollywood.

For about two-thirds of its length the picture has admirable continuity, the three main threads of the boy keeper whose love for animals urges him to steal the furs of women visitors, the orphan girl who escapes, and the little boy who evades his nurse, being introduced, developed, and intertwined with an almost masterly skill. The curve continues in symmetry, with small explosions of suspense, leading up to the theft of another fur and the breakaway of the girl from her companions, followed by a very lovely sequence in the undergrowth beside the lake where the girl crouches, nervous and embarrassed about changing her uniform under the curious eyes of the waterbirds. I cannot recall a scene of such intimacy in which mood and meaning have been so superbly enhanced by photography. Evening falls and mists creep over the lake as the boy keeper and the orphan girl talk to each other for the first time, presently to wade through the water to a disused bear pit. Not until the search for them and the missing little boy is begun is the mood broken and sensationalism lays ugly fingers on the theme in the form of an orgy of broken cages and escaping wild beasts. Delightful romance is twisted into false conclusion when the Rich Man rewards the keeper's heroism by purchasing the orphan's freedom and making him the private keeper of his own luxury zoo. Ethical values are horribly distorted in the usual interests of Big Business.

Garmes' photography envelops most of the footage in a beautiful, sentimental, and almost idyllic quality which marks an advance on the treatment of *Scarface*, *City Streets*, and *Shanghai Express*. His capacity for reflecting the mood of a sequence by lighting and camera movement and his acute sensitivity to textures are, next to the continuity, the real importance of the picture. The treatment of the love scene beside the lake with its setting of pampas plumes and silently gliding birds will certainly remain in the memory, and ranks superior to his love scene by the waves in *City Streets*. Grand close-ups of animals are seen from the camera and not the human point of view.

Roland Lee's direction has a tenderness and attention to detail hard to reconcile with his earlier work. What share Lee played in

the script is difficult to assess, but there are several touches which merit praise and the simple dialogue is used with such economy that the film might well have been made without it. On the other hand, music forms an important environment to the theme and has been well prepared in relation to the changing moods. Once again Loretta Young provides the most perfect photographic face on the screen and Garmes has given her full value. Gene Raymond plays well and freshly against Heggie's nicely handled Professor, while the minor character parts are mostly overplayed for comedy. Despite its defects, the picture stands well in the memory.

P. R.

THE REBEL

Production: Universal. Direction: Luis Trenker and Edwin Knopf. Scenario: Luis Trenker. Photography: Sepp Allgeier, Willi Goldberger, and Albert Bernitz. With Luis Trenker, Vilma Banky, and Victor Varconi. Distribution: Universal.

This new avalanche effort may be bracketed with *The Doomed Battalion* as an offshoot of the *Pitz Palu* and *Blue Light* college of Alpine endeavour. At its London showing the photography came in for a special Press mention, by which you may understand that it is largely of the backlit variety and heavy over-correction which grows tiresome by repetition. Subject in this case is period, a sort of Sabatini-cum-Farnol affair with the familiar rebel student and the ringleted blonde, supposedly in Austria when Napoleon's army was in residence. There are two good hearty chases in the Western style and an ending which probably is original—the letting loose of huge avalanches of stone and timber on to the French army which is passing below at the bottom of the gorge. The picture is built round this idea. As a director of imagination, Trenker is obviously unfamiliar with his job and is hardly more than amateurishly capable as the hero. Presumably the exteriors are authentic and the recording and interiors Hollywood. There is a concluding shot in the real Laemmle tradition in which the souls of the three martyred rebels rise from their dead bodies and go marching into the sky.

P. R.

CONTACT

Production: British Instructional. Direction: Paul Rotha. Distribution: Wardour.

THIS DESCRIPTION of Imperial Airways is Rotha's first film, and shows him more mature in criticism than in production. The film is never quite permitted to get under way. Always the critical mind of Rotha seems to be jibbing and hedging and taking care lest the mistakes he has recognised in others' work appear to damn his own. The photography is too careful, the editing too studied, and sequences of the film too altogether cerebral. A careless rapture or two would have made his aeroplanes fly higher and faster, would have supplied a necessary breeze to his photography, and made the contact between continents warmer and more exciting. These criticisms are noted only because Rotha is coming into the first line of documentary and calls for all the heavy weather we can make for him. Even if the photography were not as beautiful as it is, the size and scope of *Contact* would make it of first importance in this year's documentary account. The trouble with Rotha is that he doesn't think about cinema (like Eisenstein), nor does he patently enjoy making it (like Elton): he worries about it. If, in his next, he forgets half of what he knows, doesn't care much about the other half, and sets out to enjoy his material as well as shoot it, he will do something very exciting indeed.

J. G.

WORTH NOTING

TUGBOAT ANNIE.—The comedy mixture and rough-hearted team which delighted millions in *Min and Bill* will again delight millions with a repetition of their world-famous arguments. Once again Marie Dressler cusses to hide the sniffs and Wallace Beery mutters in his sepulchral boots. They are inimitable. Again it's on the waterfront, but this time they run a tugboat, and there's a son who does proud by his fond parents and becomes a ship's captain. In addition, there is a last-minute rescue at sea. In other words, all the old ingredients that bring a laugh and a choke and masquerade under the label of entertainment. It is a pity, because troupers like Beery and Dressler do this sort of hokum standing on their heads, and Mervyn LeRoy knows his angles too well to waste his time on such trivialities. The slowness of the opening reel is appalling and the subsequent repetition of situations tends to precipitate an early departure. But it is worth staying if only to see Beery's heroic

exploit (I am not sure exactly what he does) which is very well staged. As with most M.G.M. pictures, there is too much Dunning intermixed with authentic photography, and the length needs trimming by at least a third to keep its pace. P. R.

THE STRANGER'S RETURN.—This corn-belt epic is an important contribution to a real movie renaissance that is taking place in American cinema. Such films as *State Fair*, *The Man Who Dared*, and *The Stranger's Return* are shaping a naturalistic movie. We can forgive the tradition of movie dramatic values that has ruined the story, and the introduction of Miriam Hopkins, for the real virtue of attempting to record the people of the Middle West. King Vidor has controlled the mannerisms of the stars to this purpose, and despite the false notes in the story, Lionel Barrymore's patriarch is a sound piece of character drawing. *The Stranger's Return* is a sincere attempt to portray the lives of normal people, but box-office values and movie traditions have been too strong for the director. The old symbolism of Vidor is here, but he is not the man who directed *The Crowd*. The racket has been too tough for him. The value of this film is the courage of the producers in choosing a social theme. It is a real victory when Hollywood deserts the plaster walls for the fields and homes of Iowa. D. F. TAYLOR.

BITTER SWEET.—The film demonstrates more clearly than the play that Noel Coward had little art to prostitute. Ideas and ideals are both cheap and tawdry. As an example of direction before the sound camera escaped from the camera booth it is excellent. Songs are sustained on one set-up for the complete tune, and a variation on long shot and close-up is even denied us. But the settings and photography do deserve praise. Fred Young's camera work is comparable to that of Lee Garmes in its velvety blacks and graduated half-tones. Particularly noteworthy is the delightful lighting of faces. Sets (L. P. Williams) and costumes (Doris Zinkeisen) are lovely in their suggestion and reveal a very close co-operation between art director and cameraman. For the definitely imaginative camera work and setting *Bitter Sweet* marks a real advance on anything yet produced in England. D. F. T.

TWENTY-SIX COMMISSARS.—This belongs to the historical school of Soviet films, and in subject and technique may be classified with *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Ten Days*, and *Potemkin*. Against a background of oil derricks and sand dunes, the film tells of the

revolution in Baku, the British intervention, the arrest and murder of the twenty-six leaders of the Baku Soviet. This, unfortunately, is a silent film, for the first two reels, at least, lend themselves to dialogue treatment. These two reels are interior shots of a meeting where the conflicting tendencies of the people towards the intervention find expression. The sequence is shot with considerable imagination, but titles are insufficient. Later, when action replaces talk, the absence of dialogue is welcome. The drama moves along swiftly, unhampered by that microphone consciousness which still seems to paralyse some Soviet directors.

Two other sequences are notable—a civil riot building up from the smallest of incidents, and the final massacre of the commissars in the desert—a sequence which is handled with a real feeling for the drama of the event. The utter callousness of the massacre is equalled by the quiet stoicism of the revolutionaries.

Twenty-six Commissars was directed by Shengelaya. His selection of types is superb. So also is the camera work. The censor will never allow this film to be publicly exhibited in Britain, although it is true. Film societies ought to show it. RALPH BOND.

SPRING ON THE FARM.—This background educational film, produced by the E.M.B. Film Unit and directed by Evelyn Spice, is a good journalistic account of Spring. Cut and designed for children, it is naturally slow in tempo, though the numbers of young animals will stir the fundamental sentimentalisms of English and Scots in any cinema. Photography is notably competent, and shows that there is as much value in a white sky as in blue sky with cumulus clouds. D. F. T.

MICKEY'S GALA PREMIÈRE.—In a Miscellany note in the summer number I suggested that the drawn film was capable of much wider development and that it might easily be used as a medium for caricature. As if in illustration of the suggestion, Walt Disney has made this burlesque of a Hollywood première in which he introduces caricatures of the stars. Mischievously but not bitterly, he pictures the people of the studios—Greta Garbo, Douglas Fairbanks, Chaplin, Marie Dressler, the Barrymores and the rest—and subtly satirises their peculiarities as they react variously to Mickey's antics on the screen. Disney is one of the few really individual artists in films, and his work is nearer to cinema proper than that of most orthodox directors. His break into caricature is further proof of his brilliantly imaginative mind and his devotion to the cause of development through experiment. F. H.

FILM SOCIETIES

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY

The Society owes a debt of gratitude both for its origin and for its present flourishing condition to its founders, Hugh Carleton Greene and James Gibson. In January 1931 they obtained from the University Proctors permission (hitherto withheld) to start a film society on the condition that they did not attempt to make films themselves. Since that time the Society has continued to hold twelve meetings a year, or four a term.

Meetings are held on Sundays, and do much to enliven the deadness of Sunday evenings. A drawback to this is the difficulty of fixing up a programme which shall last exactly two hours; but since meetings continue during the Trinity term we are perhaps the only Society that does not have a "season," but shows films throughout the year. That this policy is in the circumstances a sound one is proved by the fact that there is very little fluctuation in the Society's strength, which has since the beginning remained pretty steadily in the region of three hundred members.

The first, and to those original members who saw it perhaps the most unforgettable programme, was shown in the local Masonic Hall, and consisted of *The Seashell* and *The Clergyman*, Chaplin's *Fatal Mallet*, and *The Battleship Potemkin*. A promising start, especially in view of the fact that *The Seashell* aroused such a controversy and remained the subject of such heated conversation during the fortnight intervening between that meeting and the next, that it must have contributed invaluablely to the encouragement of hesitating prospective members.

They certainly needed encouragement. For a whole term we endured the discomforts of small hard chairs and the inconveniences of a single more or less silent projector accompanied by a gramophone which would keep running down. But the pioneer spirit wanes in Oxford as swiftly as it waxes, and it is doubtful if even the continued

From "The House of Death" a Moschrabpom - Film production (U.S.S.R.), directed by W. F. Federow, depicting the career and banishment of Feodor Dostoevski under Nicholas I., the part of Dostoevski is taken by Chmeliouff of the Moscow Arts Theatre.





From "Fugitives," a Ufa film made under the new Stapenhorst regime. Directed by Gustav Ucicky, it deals with the exodus of the Volga Germans during the Russian Revolution. The cast includes Hans Albers and Kathe von Nagy.

excellence of those first programmes—*The Student of Prague*, *Faust*, *Bed and Sofa*—would have been able to preserve the life of the young Society but for its transference at the first meeting of the next term from the barren Hall into a comfortable cinema. The Electra Palace had been newly equipped for sound and the Society soon celebrated its removal by showing talkies. A memorable evening was one of the hottest of the summer of 1931 on which *Hallelujah* was shown.

Since then it has been the Society's policy to procure the latest continental productions as soon as they become available, and to vary them with an occasional outstanding film of the silent period. *Turksib*, *Earth*, *The Ghost that Never Returns*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Caligari*, and *The Italian Straw Hat* fairly represent our programmes in the silent class; and *Quick Millions*, *Princess à Vos Ordres*, *The Murder of Karamazov*, *En Natt*, and *Maedchen in Uniform* in the other.

The Society does not interest itself very deeply in the theoretical side of the cinema. In fact, the only speaker who has so far visited us is Anthony Asquith, who at the second meeting gave us some of his ideas on the use of sound.

Last term, the officers were fortunate in bringing off a unique coup by showing *Paris Méditerranée* almost the moment it was landed in this country. Certainly they can claim to be the first to put the film through an English projector. With this as their final bow, Mr. Greene and Mr. Gibson put an end to the first and most encouraging stage of the Society's life by resigning their respective offices of President and Secretary, and thus give us leave to sign ourselves in their place.

B. H. DE C. IRELAND.
A. D. WOZLEY.

THE FILM SOCIETY, London, has decided to extend the rate of subscription, hitherto available only to film technicians employed at a salary not exceeding £10, to all students of accredited educational institutions who are over sixteen years of age. The new rate is 15s., including tax. Events on the continent have complicated the work of selecting the films to be shown this season, but among the films from which a final selection will be made are: *The Deserter*, *Ivan*, *Komsomol*, *Twenty-Six Commissars*, *An American Tragedy*, *Blackshirts*, *La Maternelle*, *Anna and Elizabeth*, *S.A.—Mann Brand*. Application for membership should be made to Miss J. M. Harvey, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1.

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY hopes to have another successful season. The Hon. Secretary is S. G. Hawes, 163 Pershore Road, Birmingham, 5. Performances will be held in the Scala Cinema and the subscription is 10s. 6d.

CHESHIRE FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. Miss Diana Baerlin, Whatcroft Hall, Northwich, Cheshire), commenced its season on 14th September with *Bluebottles*, *The Spider and the Fly*, and *War is Hell*. Eight monthly performances are to be given on Sundays at the Plaza, Northwich.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. R. H. Muxlow, 16 Northampton Road, Croydon). Monthly performances are to be held on Sunday afternoons in the Picture House, North End. The subscription is 17s. 6d. An inaugural meeting on 22nd October will be addressed by Anthony Asquith and Paul Rotha.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD (17 South St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh, 2). Victor Saville opens the new season with an address on 16th October and the first performance will be given on Sunday, 29th October, when *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* will be shown.

GLASGOW FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2). Cranston's, a still larger cinema, has been booked for this season, which opens on 15th October with *The Virtuous Isadore*. Victor Saville will be present at this meeting and will address the Society.

LEEDS FILM GROUP (Hon. Sec. Jackson Braham, 43 Mexborough Drive, Leeds, 7). With already two successful seasons to its credit this Society hopes to remove shortly from its present private theatre, which seats only one hundred, to larger premises. During the summer months it has shown *The Girl in the Moon*, *Nina Petrovna*, and *Turksib*. Discussions and meetings for lectures are held periodically. The Group is also building up a library of film literature and has commenced an indexed information bureau.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College, Leicester). Two performances are held on Saturday evenings once a month, the subscription being 10s. 6d. for the 8.15 performance and 7s. 6d. for the 6 p.m. performance. The first show will be given on 21st October when it is hoped to screen *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick*. Arrangements have been made with John Grierson to give a course of lectures on "The Art of Cinema and its Social Relationships."

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY (69 Liverpool Street, Salford). Performances in future will be given in the Rivoli, Rusholme, on Saturdays at 4 p.m. The first show of the season was given on 23rd September, when *En Natt*, *Voice of the World*, and *Technocracy* were included in the programme. The subscription is 10s.

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. Mrs. Hilda Harrisson, Sandlands, Boars Hill, Oxford). The first exhibition of this new society will be given early in November. The subscription for eight Sunday performances will be 10s.

WEST HAM FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. Arthur L. Watson, 9 First Avenue, Plaistow). In course of organisation this new society, which will be run on lines similar to others throughout the country, should draw a large membership from the populous district it will serve.

B.H.F.S. (Hon. Sec. M. Hatzfeld, 42 Windermere Avenue, Brondesbury, London, N.W.6). Another new society, with a cryptic name, which intends to give a season of four performances with two subscriptions, 10s. and 5s. 6d. Among the films it is hoped to show are: *The Girl in the Moon*, *City of Song*, *The Wonderful Lie*, *Hungarian Rhapsody*, and *Murder*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY. Arrangements for the season include the showing of *Don Quixote*, *Contact* and other films, a lecture by Paul Rotha, an exhibition of stills and an amateur film competition. Further developments of the Society include the arranging of children's matinees, the formation of a film club, and the encouragement of production groups. The Bishop of Liverpool is President and the Hon. Treasurer is Ingram Knowles, District Bank, Port Sunlight.

LINCOLN. Frank Carlill, 84 Ruskin Avenue, Lincoln, is endeavouring to form a local film society and would welcome inquiries and support.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION in Great Britain has appointed David F. Ritchie special Cinema Representative. Lists of recommended films are sent periodically to members, and in districts where there is a film society local branches are advised to enter into close co-operation.

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Conrad Veidt in "I was a Spy," a Gaumont British production, directed by Victor Saville.



Two films directed by Paul Rotha. Above from "Contact," the British Instructional film of Imperial Airways. Below, from "Roadwards," the Daimler car film produced by British Independent Productions.



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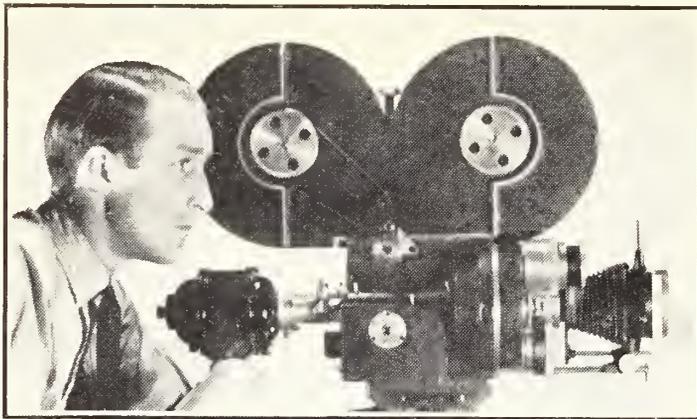
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THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER

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ERIC M. KNIGHT

AFTER many years of writing on cinema I have begun to despair of revolt against screen-pap coming from within the industry itself. I consider Hollywood and recall the broken hopes of Eisenstein, Stiller, Murnau, Flaherty, Dudley Murphy, and the other able men who were battered by the system there.

The crystallization of the film method must come from outside commercial ranks. More and more I am convinced that the 16 mm. film is the avenue to progress.

The tremendous cost of modern tone-film production raises an insurmountable barrier before the young would-be creator in celluloid. But the sub-calibre film offers him an inexpensive field in which to work.

The amazing lack of good sub-calibre film work is not due, as is commonly supposed, to the machines now available. I find it due almost solely to lack of imagination on the part of the workmen in the narrow-film field. Give a cinema group a supply of film stock and usually it will try to produce a "play" in imitation of Hollywood. If the world didn't produce another film-play for five years we'd still be over-supplied. Shoot sonatas of leaves and grass, tone-poems of clouds and water, gavottes in abstract shape, documentaries of the machines you toil at and the land you live in! But don't shoot a play!

The greatest need, as I see it, for progress in the narrow-film field, is for greater technical knowledge on the part of the creator. Generally the artist detests anything that smacks of figures and tables; yet cinema is art-through-machine and it must be studied. You may have the finely sensitive eye that can see a camera-angle, frame a composition, see the delight of splashed sunlight and half-lit shadows; but that's only the beginning. If you won't learn to use a

photometer, to set the right stop, to handle your filters, you'd better go back to pencil-sketching.

In fact, the best workman will go beyond his needs and will start at once to do his own laboratory work. For the one great drawback of the sub-calibre film at this time is the use of reversal stock—*i.e.*, stock that is developed by the film maker into a positive. You send the exposed film back to the maker. In some factories your film is machine-developed—by a machine that automatically labours to iron out all the fades that you slaved to get.

To record on negative stock, to develop and print it yourself, immediately makes your medium flexible; the grace of dissolves, superimpositions, the entire possibilities of montage, are then available. Under these conditions the rank amateurishness of the sub-calibre film disappears, and in truth you can attain all the technical perfection of the standard film of commercial cinema—and even more.

The sub-calibre film as a field for the film-artist is now being enriched by the 16 mm. sound-cameras.

Two years ago the American Society of Motion Picture Engineers declared publicly that 16 mm. sound-on-film was impossible. Recently I made a film with the “impossible” camera created by RCA-Victor. Still in the experimental stage at that time, still full of many “bugs,” the camera could fulfil its major destiny: it could record sound with all the fidelity of any ten thousand dollar Hollywood apparatus. Speech recorded perfectly; music recordings were surpassed only by the lately developed “High Fidelity” and “Wide Range” systems now used in Hollywood, which record overtones in the extremely high and extremely low cycles.

The only drawback to the coming sound cameras in the narrow-film field is lack of flexibility. They are produced for the amateur who wants to take a picture of little Nancy singing “Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows.” Recording again is on the rigid reversal film stock, and there is no means of post-synchronization of sound. In other words, it is a talkie-camera—and what the film-creator needs is a tone-film camera; one that records on negative stock and which will thus allow all conceivable variations of sight-images and sound-images that are correlated at the desire of the artist in the printing.

Possibly the construction of such cameras must be worked out by ingenious amateurs who will guide the mass-production men much as radio amateurs were always far ahead of the industrial radio-builders in the earlier days of development.

But whether in sound or in silence, the narrow film field offers a chance to those young men who groan at the vulgarity and artistic sterility of the movie industry's product.

There are clubs, schools, and homes, all with 16 mm. projectors. The present supply of 16 mm. films is pretty poor, and I see no great reason for making those projectors grind merrily. There are reissues of Hollywood films in stock at movie camera stores—if that cheers you up. But, apart from the remarkable *Fall of the House of Usher*, I know of no sub-calibre film that is worth showing twice.

The would-be film creator on both sides of the Atlantic would do well to bottle up the energy now expended on impotent hate of Hollywood and its screen lollipops. That energy could be better expended upon production of good sub-calibre films; in formation of a central bureau to distribute such pictures to the clubs, schools, and homes that need them. Thus the public, fed for years on the dope of sex-stories, could be made to realise that the screen can give us something far more stirring and vital than *Cocktail Hour* or *Gold Diggers of 1933*.

AMATEUR PRODUCTION IN IRELAND

DUBLIN—traditionally one of the intellectual centres of the British Isles—has, up to the present, held itself aloof from films. It is true that Dublin goes to the pictures more than almost any other city of its size, and the Dublin audiences are notoriously critical, especially of acting. Nevertheless, intellectual Dublin occupies itself with other things, and hardly knows that the cinema claims a place among the arts.

Recently, however, there have been signs of a changed attitude, and a few films have been made by amateurs—notably *By Accident*, which was composed and directed by J. N. G. Davidson. The latest and most promising of these, at present in course of production, is *Guests of the Nation*, from Frank O'Connor's book of the same name, dealing with the Anglo-Irish War of 1922. It is directed by Denis Johnston ("E. W. Tocher") the author of several interesting and original plays. The scenario applies a technique modelled on the classical Russian style to a subject for which it is perfectly suited. In particular, its continuity (the bugbear of the amateur) is surprisingly mature. The cast is drawn largely from the experienced personnel of the Dublin Gate Theatre Company. Assistance given by the Saorstát Government has included the loan of two armoured cars and an empty police barracks. The production is arousing considerable interest, and, whether it succeeds or fails artistically, will undoubtedly stimulate others to make use of the material which lies ready to hand in such abundance.

G. F. D.

TWO INDUSTRIAL FILMS

ROADWAYS.—*Direction: Paul Rotha. Photography: Jack Parker. Produced by Paul Rotha for the B.S.A. and Daimler Companies under the supervision of Western Electric.* HUMBER-HILLMAN.—*Direction: Jack B. Holmes. Photography: Jimmy Rogers. Produced by Steuart Films for the Humber-Hillman Car Company.*

TOGETHER these two films indicate a new spirit in advertising films. They are directed with sincerity, a rare thing in this side of the business. In common with all advertising films they suffer from concessions made to the advertiser. For instance, Rotha's film shows every process in the Daimler works, thus leaving little space for emphasis or construction within the limits of his two reels; while Holmes has had to omit the final assembly of cars and jump straight into the open road from the chassis assembly in order that the film should be perennially useful to his advertiser, that is to say, so that the advertiser can tack on shots of his new models each year. Both films are concerned with motor car manufacture, but the virtues of one are by no means the virtues of the other.

Roadwards has two themes. First there is the story of the country and industry linked by roads and the factory providing the means of getting to the country; and secondly, more importantly, there is the story of the workmen who make the cars, the workers behind the machine. For the first time we have a commercial advertising film interested in humanities. The most significant sequence in the film is in the smithy, the drop-hammer forging, where Rotha has enlarged on the process, creating imaginatively and not hurrying on to the next stage. The fault of the whole film is the snip-snap from one process to another that makes the film run instead of marching and building. It constitutes, however, a real advance on *Contact*, there being a greater appreciation of movie values, though the drop-hammer forging sequence is the only one in which Rotha has given himself a chance to construct. Pictorially the film is full of good looks, the lighting of factory processes being imaginative and controlled.

Jack Holmes' picture is a solid initial job, but he is yet to master the whole bag of movie tricks. To advance in documentary he must learn to build upon themes. He must be more interested in the man behind the machine, in the internal aspect rather than the external. On the whole his film has been more thought out than Rotha's, but his form approximates too closely to symphonics (*vide* John Grierson, *Cinema Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 2). It is not enough to hang your film on the idea of the song of the wheel. *Humber-*

Hillman is homogenous, and the opening into the factory has a very happy smoothness. Photography is standard; that is to say, it is uninspired, it gives no value to the machine. Holmes is content to flat-light a subject, intent on just lighting, not on creating a mood or effect to reveal some new aspect of his subject. This leads him into an inability to seize the significant detail in a process. His faults will be overcome with a closer acquaintance with the medium.

Both films should be noted as the beginning of a new attitude to advertising films.

DONALD FRASER.

NEWS REEL

ACCORDING to reports emanating from New York, says the *American Cinematographer*, there is in formation a corporation for the furnishing of 16 mm. sound pictures to approximately two thousand theatres now closed. The plan calls for portable projectors with a complete programme on a four-thousand-foot reel, consisting of feature, cartoon, and travelogue. It is anticipated a show of this nature will call for a rental of from ten to twenty dollars.

It is the contention that these 16 mm. programmes will not interfere with the professional-sized pictures, and that negotiations are going on with Paramount and Fox for releases.

AN EXPERIMENT in providing films suitable for children in villages where there are no cinemas has recently been made by B. D. Margerison, of Bradford, at Northewram in Yorkshire. A two hours' performance, given in the schoolroom, included travel and instructional films and two comedies, all on 16 mm. stock (silent). Admission charges were 2d. and 4d. for children and 6d. for adults. If sufficient support is forthcoming it is hoped to make a regular round of villages, visiting them weekly or fortnightly.

A RECORD of the Everest Expedition, made by Wyn Harris, who had no previous film experience, has been produced with a £40 Kodak camera. The film, which lasts for seventy-five minutes, is a valuable document, and as the 16 mm. stock on which it was made cost only £30 it should do much to encourage amateur production when it comes to be publicly shown.

THE AIMS of the Socialist Film Council, London, is to produce for the Labour Movement 16 mm. films of propaganda value. Its first film, *The Road to Hell*, directed by Rudolph Messel, is reviewed in this issue. *What the News Reel Doesn't Show*, its second film, shows

work on the Five-Year Plan in Russia. These films are silent, but the next production, an anti-war film, will be a talkie. The personnel of the Council includes Rudolph Messel, Terence Greenidge, Raymond Postgate and Naomi Mitchison.

RECENT additions to the Pathéscope 9.5 mm. library include Arthur Robinson's *The Informer*, Chaplin's *The Count*, and Fritz Lang's *The Spy*. The famous Ufa film *Faust* will be added shortly.

THE NEW advertising films for the Morris Car Company have been produced by the company's own unit, most of whom have other jobs in the works at Cowley. Six talkies have now been completed and will be shown throughout the country by four travelling projector units.

TWO NEW books published by Pitman contain much practical information of a technical nature for the amateur. "Commercial Cinematography," by George H. Sewell (7s. 6d.), deals with the sub-standard film for those who wish to make personal films of their own business undertakings, and "Amateur Talking Pictures and Recording," by Bernard Brown (7s. 6d.), describes and examines the various equipments now available for making sound films.

SOCIETIES and schools using 9.5 mm. films will find the new Pathéscope 200B projector worth inspection. With a 200-watts lamp and powerful lenses it gives an excellently clear picture ten feet wide.

THE SCENARIO Service, formerly conducted by *Cinema Quarterly*, has now been taken over by the Independent Film-makers Association. Will subscribers who still have MSS. which they do not intend to use, please return them immediately?

MOBILE PRODUCTION UNIT

A NEW service which should interest independent film-makers is the mobile production unit belonging to Photographic Art Productions. The unit is entirely self-contained and may be used either for studio or location work. Provision is made to accommodate up to nine mute cameras. Condenser microphones are used, and the truck is provided with cables which can operate up to 200 feet from the microphones. The truck and crew, including cameraman and recording engineer, may be hired per day or week, and a studio in Wardour Street is available for post-synchronising and interior work. If it were more generally known that facilities of this sort are available independent and amateur producers might be encouraged to embark on more ambitious productions.

THE ROAD TO HELL

Production: Socialist Film Council. Direction and Photography: Rudolph Messel. With Naomi Mitchison, Terence Greenidge, Raymond Postgate, Ian Fox.

To start with let me cast a large and heavy brickbat at this production. It alleges to be propaganda against the Means Test. If it is propaganda for anything it is propaganda for the worst type of defeatism. If the working classes of England behave as the particular family in this film does under the pressure of bad government and worse administration, there is no hope for anyone, and the Bishop of Durham is right.

Passing, however, to technicalities this production (sixteen mm., amateur throughout, cost £66) is a first-class object lesson to every film group or independent amateur in the country. It is well constructed, well acted, well cut, well lit, and well directed. It has economy of movement and largesse of effect. And incidentally it introduces a fine movie-actor—Terence Greenidge.

Film groups, please see this film and learn something from Messel's work.

B. W.

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Advisers:

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PAUL ROTH	BASIL WRIGHT
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THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS ASSOCIATION has been formed to bring together and assist those who are interested in the production of Documentary, Experimental, and Educational films.

CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT

The Association will put members in touch with each other and where practicable will arrange that several members, though living in different parts of the country, may work together as a unit on one film. In suitable centres autonomous groups will be formed so that by pooling their resources members may be able to widen the scope of their activities and even set up collective studios.

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

The Advisers of the Association are at all times prepared to place their expert knowledge at the disposal of members. Advice on production, on the preparation of scenarios, on treatment, photography, editing and every aspect of film-making is available on application, in the first instance, to the Hon. Secretary.

REVIEWS OF FILMS

Certain of the Advisers have agreed to review members' films and to give constructive criticism either privately or in the official organ of the Association.

FILM EXCHANGE

A catalogue of films made by members will be prepared and circulated. A suitable rental will be charged to non-members. Where possible the Association will endeavour to find a market for the production of its members.

SCENARIO SERVICE

Scenarios which meet the requirements of the objects of the Association may be entered in the Scenario Service. Manuscripts will be available for production by members free of charge, but suitable fees will be asked from non-members. A list of themes and subjects required by commercial firms and educational organizations will be circulated to members.

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A private Bulletin will be issued to members periodically. This will contain the names and addresses of all members as enrolled and confidential information regarding the various activities of the Association.

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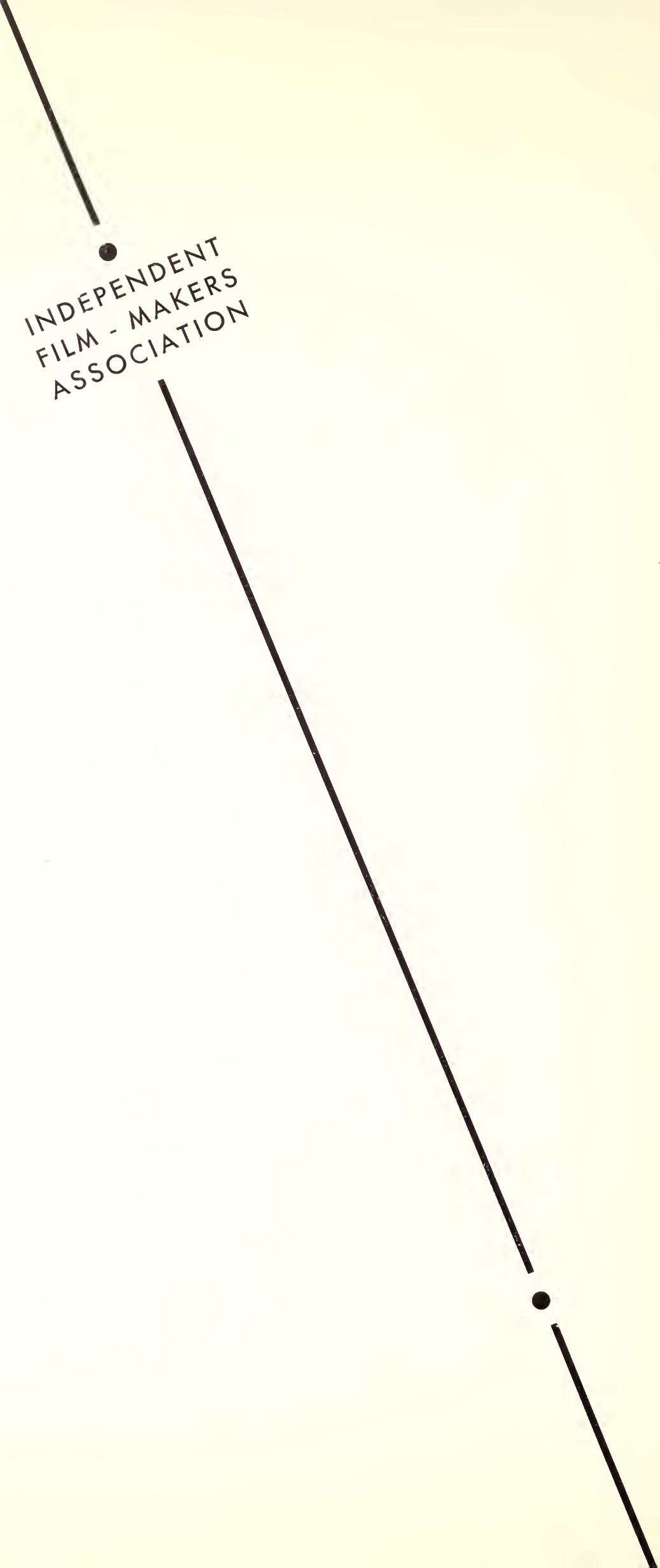
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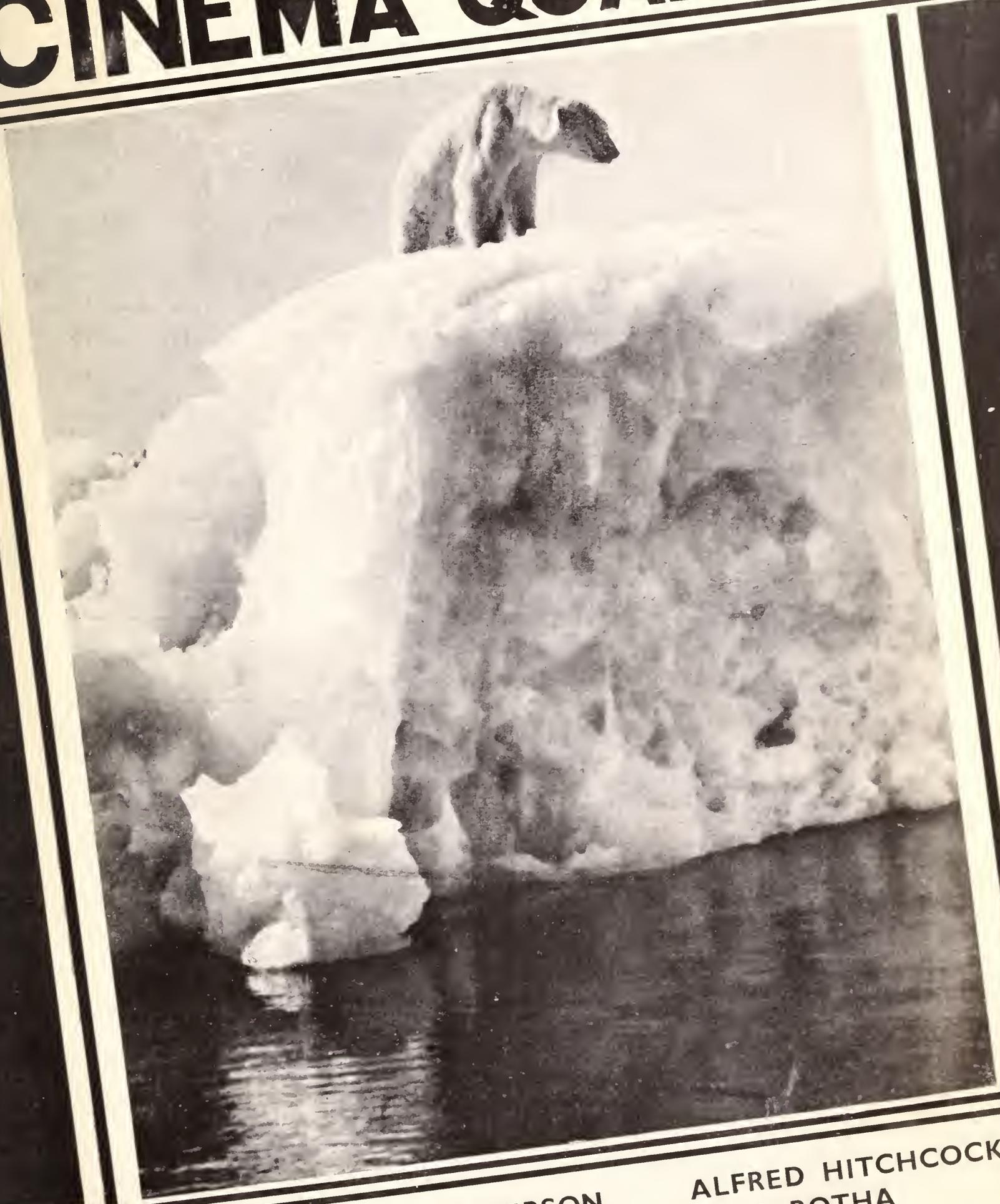
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THE SPECTATOR

FILM TERMINOLOGY

THE LOOSE use of loose terms is characteristic of an art not yet hampered with academics. But an attempt must be made some time, and the sooner the better, to rationalise the phraseology of cinema—its technical terms, the names of its species, and the definition of its functions. Some of the soundest writers on the film are unintelligible to the ordinary reader because of the jargon they use. Conservative Sunday newspapers and staid reviews, where even colloquialism is frowned upon, bewilder the reader accustomed to plain English when he comes to the cinema feature. Nor are our own pages exempt. Every writer has his own terminology, and it frequently happens that one exponent will use the same word as another when in fact he means something entirely different.

“Documentary” is perhaps the most abused word of all. It is used variously and mistakenly for educational, cultural (if anyone knows even what that means), propagandist, travelogue, interest, industrial, descriptive, and even advertising (*x* shillings a foot, go anywhere, shoot anything).

The word might have come to mean any of these things, though it could never mean them all. But it belongs properly to the genre to which it was first attached. And it is the association of the word with this genre that has given it the prestige which other users so much covet. Documentary proper is an art form as distinct as verse from prose and should no more be confused with the lecture film, the screen magazine, or *Secrets of Nature* than they are with studio dramatics. Perhaps the best definition of documentary is that once given by John Grierson in these pages: the creative treatment of actuality. Documentary does not merely describe, it interprets—using the living scene and the living story as opposed to the artificial scene and the acted story. Had this confusion in terms not arisen we might indeed have been spared the arty photography and pseudo-symphonic structure which have ruined so many educational and descriptive films.

THE PICTURE'S THE THING

APART FROM such elementals the trouble in coining a word, as in creating a technique, in films, is that it may so soon become obsolete.

The cinema should be the last home of dogmatism. Is not tele-

vision ready to be put on the market at the opportune moment? When the electric camera arrives what will happen to montage? And what of colour? And stereoscopy? The theorist in cinema has little time to gain a foothold before some new development sends his dogmas hurtling into the abyss of the forever-discarded. The film does not develop as painting, music, or literature have developed. It changes. It is dependent on the scientist and the engineer for its very existence. Its tools do not evolve in a gradual process of improvement. They are liable to be replaced with disturbing suddenness, requiring a complete re-orientation of ideas and the learning of an entirely new technique. Yet did not Homer exist before the printed word? And is not fine poetry still hammered out on the modern typewriter? The poet uses words to convey ideas; the film-maker uses images. No matter how much the mechanical production of pictures changes, cinema, if it continues at all, must still mean visual expression. Whatever its size or its frame or its colour the picture will remain the thing.

LITERATURE AND THE FILM

WE HAVE⁷ long complained of the influence of literature and the stage on the film. It was refreshing therefore to come across, in a little book of critical essays called "Gog Magog" (London: Dent, 7s. 6d.), a brief consideration of the influence of the film on literature and the drama. G. W. Stonier, the author of this modest "anatomy of modernism," points out how playwrights and novelists have tried deliberate imitation. "Street Scene," "Grand Hotel," "Stamboul Train," "42nd Parallel," are all undisguised efforts at cinema technique. The stage, in attempted retaliation perhaps, has its revolving platforms, and, as in "Hatter's Castle," its divided proscenium. Then there is the literary close-up, which Stonier finds in the writings of James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Dos Passos, and many other contemporary authors, when the distance between the reader and each of the characters in the novel is liable to shift. Writers, he says, now have a greater sense of *visual* property. This is not a new realisation, however, for the aim of writing has always been to convey images by means of words; but the cinema has brought this home afresh. Imagism and impressionism have both received new stimulus from the film, though how far the influence has been direct it would be difficult to estimate. And had the anatomist also examined painting and photography he would have found the influence of the cinema apparent in new angles of approach and in the revelation of the hidden beauty in the commonplace.

All of which goes to prove that, after all, we cannot take our

cinema too seriously. In any case, did not H. G. Wells say years ago that on the screen "a more subtle fabric of suggestion, a completer beauty and power, might be possible than any of our tried and trusted equipment could achieve"?

WORDS AND MUSIC

SO FAR the film may have had little influence on the development of contemporary music, but the ideas Alfred Hitchcock discusses in this issue of *Cinema Quarterly* may ultimately have far-reaching effects. For some time the virtue of the spoken word has been in doubt. The hundred-per-cent. talkie is no more, and even Hollywood is beginning to use words selectively and even impressionistically, instead of in the name of realism. Hitchcock did this in his first talkie in the early days, and if his ideas on music when put into practice create a like sensation, there is no saying what may happen. Whether music and film are made to march in the same rhythm, or whether speech, sound, and image are used to build up an orchestrated unity, the music must be specially composed, and it is likely that the musical director of a film will soon be of primary, if not of paramount, importance.

May all the gods forbid the filming of classical opera. A sixteen-stone Romeo trying to embrace a voluminous Juliet is bad enough on the stage—spare us the close-up! There is, however, enormous possibility in the development of true cine-opera as an entirely new medium, conceived as a whole and executed in unity of sound and image. This is an exciting subject to which we hope to return later.

Meanwhile, who would not give all the mighty Wurlitzers to have Fischinger's musical abstracts established as the *entr'acte*?

SUB-STANDARD PRODUCTION

Correspondents continually ask how to gain practical experience in film-making when opportunities of entering the studios are so slight. The obvious and soundest reply is: Buy a sub-standard camera or join a group engaged in sub-standard production. Learn to handle film, to know the smell and the feel of celluloid: get hold of a pair of scissors, and cut and splice, cut and splice till you can make the frames march in rhythm. No amount of theory is of value unless backed by practice of this sort. Get it at any price.

NORMAN WILSON.

THE FUNCTION OF THE DIRECTOR

1. THE DOCUMENTARY DIRECTOR

PAUL ROTH

A DIRECTOR goes documentary by choice and not coincidence. In so doing he seeks to serve his conscience and avoid the cupidity of story-film as it flourishes under most studio conditions.

Documentary defines not subject or style, but approach.

It denies neither trained actors nor the advantages of staging. It justifies the use of every known technical artifice to gain its effect on the spectator.

Two courses are open to the director of documentary. He may seek themes and material at the ends of the earth in the manner of a Flaherty; or he may face the problems of the community around him in the manner of a Grierson. The choice is personal. These two names plot the extremities of the dramatised documentary as distinct from the descriptive style favoured by the lesser lights of the racket.

To the documentary director the appearance of things and people is only superficial. It is the meaning behind the thing and the significance underlying the person that occupy his attention. To the documentary approach every manufacture, every organisation, every industry, every craft represents at one point or another the fulfilment of a human interest.

Documentary approach to cinema differs from that of story-film not in its disregard for craftsmanship, but in the purpose to which that craftsmanship is put. Documentary is a trade just as carpentry or pot-making. As a trade its technique must be mastered if the product is to be valuable and have meaning. But technique alone is not sufficient.

A film must serve a purpose beyond itself if it is to survive. It may serve entertainment (as the studio producers dictate), it may serve propaganda (as the publicists demand), or it may serve art (as the highbrows pretend), but it cannot be an end in itself.

Because documentary is in its infancy and because production is largely (but not wholly) made possible by serving propagandist ends, the publicist himself is the main enemy of the director. Because cinema is everyone's plaything to criticise for good or bad, your publicist will demand the inclusion of this or the exclusion of that to the prostitution of your conscience.

Therefore, three demands must be made by the documentary director: the right to theorise, the right to experiment (time and footage), and the right to attempt to satisfy his conscience. He may have to travel to sacrificial lengths to obtain these rights. Because he must look to the future he will try to satisfy the publicist's demands, perhaps produce a bad film thereby, and get kicked in the pants just the same. It is at present a matter of compromise, of bluff as bluff can. If he is ambitious he will hope to get away with a number of second-rate films, goaded on by the belief that one day he will turn out a top-notch.

The documentary director must remember that his theme (or message) alone compels audience interest. There is nothing personal in a documentary with which an audience can identify itself. Perhaps there are mass or social instincts, but not individual emotions. But in story-film the audience can assume a personal interest in characters or incidents, often projecting itself into the position of a participant. Because there is a story to divert attention from realities, the task of making story-film is more simple than that of documentary. In fact, the audience will accept deliberate misstatements of truth in story-film, but to lie in documentary demands infinite skill, perfect craftsmanship and an accurate knowledge of audience psychology.

Unlike the story-film director, the maker of documentary has yet to gain the full co-operation of the trade. The renter and the exhibitor do not understand documentary, and I am not sure that they have tried. They search for established publicity angles and, finding none, invent them. Yet their habits are retrogressive. *Moana* was issued as "the Love of a South Sea Siren." Documentary must always go forward. It needs new distributions and new publicities. These will come.

Meanwhile, production becomes specialised, demanding mentalities capable of approaching a multitude of treatments, from the school-film to the dramatic industrial.

But, if it is not to go the way of story-film, documentary must be protected against exploitation for commercial profit alone. Its directors must retain freedom for their ideals.

ANOTHER REPERTORY CINEMA

THE FAMOUS Everyman Theatre, Hampstead, has been re-opened with a programme of repertory. J. S. Fairfax-Jones, one of our London correspondents and a prominent member of the film societies' movement, is a director of this new venture. Among the first films to be shown are *Le Million*, *Tabu*, and *Cimarron*.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

on

MUSIC IN FILMS

In an Interview with
STEPHEN WATTS

WHEN THE British student of intelligent cinema turns to survey the creative side of film-making in his own country the names available for reference are pathetically few. Even ranging over the whole of the talkie's short history he can probably produce a bare half-dozen, say (alphabetically for safety!) Asquith, Dupont, Grierson, Hitchcock, Korda, and Saville, and only the two last-named of these can be regarded, at the moment, as contributors to the ordinary cinema.

But the arrival of *Waltzes from Vienna* and the news that he has joined the Gaumont-British organization bring back to prominence the name of Alfred Hitchcock.

His return to active direction is almost accidental. After his term as production supervisor at British International—a regrettable, fallow period for the keen intelligence which gave us *Blackmail* and *Murder*—and his signing a contract for Korda, he was approached by Tom Arnold, the theatrical manager, to supervise the filming of *Waltzes from Vienna*. The step from that to actually directing it was taken because the subject interested Hitchcock so much.

It sounds strange that the most unremittingly cinematic of our directors, the realist and humanist, Hitchcock, should undertake what seemed like simply the rendering into celluloid of a stage musical success.

The clue is in that word "musical". He saw here a chance to do two things: to try out some of his ideas about the relation of music to the film, and try to prove that a film that *is* a film can be created out of a ready-made theatre subject.

It was of these beliefs and theories about music and the film that Hitchcock talked to me, illustrating his points with instances from the film he was then busily engaged on cutting.

"The arrival of talkies, as you know, temporarily killed action in pictures," he began, "but it did just as much damage to music.

Producers and directors were obsessed by words. They forgot that one of the greatest emotional factors in the silent cinema was the musical accompaniment. They have gradually realized that action should still come first—that, talkies or not, they are still making motion pictures. But music as an artistic asset of the film is still sadly neglected.

“I was greatly interested in music and films in the silent days and I have always believed that the coming of sound opened up a great new opportunity. The accompanying music came at last entirely under the control of the people who made the picture. That was surely an advance on having a separate score played by cinema orchestras. The tremendous advantage of a film being musically accompanied had been demonstrated by ‘silents’ like *Ben Hur* and *Way Down East*. Yet when it became possible to blend film and music together in an artistic entity the opportunity was overlooked, or at least left undeveloped.

“The result is that the only dramatic use of music in talkies—leaving out of account the ‘musicals’ which interpolate ‘numbers’ rather than employ music—is the crude instance of slow music for love scenes. Anything else has been an odd stunt and not a properly worked out scheme.

“But that conventional soft music is the basis of the right idea—expressing the mood of the scene. It is an elementary application of it.”

“Do you believe, then, that every film should have a complete musical score before it goes into production?” I asked.

“I do,” Hitchcock replied emphatically. “Though by ‘complete’ I do not mean continuous. That would be monotonous. Silence is often very effective and its effect is heightened by the proper handling of the music before and after.

“There is, somewhere, the correct musical accompaniment for almost any scene—music which will improve the scene. But none at all is better than the wrong music.”

“But how would you relate music and action? What would you say was the underlying purpose of all film-music? Can you give me an example?” I asked.

“Well, the first and obvious use is atmospheric. To create excitement. To heighten tensivity. In a scene of action, for instance, when the aim is to build up to a physical climax, music adds excitement just as effectively as cutting—but I shall have more to say about that comparison later. Music can also be a background to a scene in any mood and a commentary on dialogue, but, frankly, I have not yet made up my mind about the function of music in relation to dialogue in general. I can only give specific instances where I think it might be profitably used.”

“Surely the trouble there,” I suggested, “is that an audience cannot listen to and appreciate both words and the musical background at the same time?”

“Partly that. But not entirely. I might argue that I do not want the audience to listen consciously to the music at all. It might be achieving its desired effect without the audience being aware of how that effect was being achieved.

“No. The problem goes deeper than that. Music with certain types of dialogue might be made to achieve a great deal, and here I can give you an apt illustration from *Waltzes from Vienna*.

“There is a dialogue scene between a young man and a woman. It is a quiet, tender scene. But the woman’s husband is on his way. The obvious way to get suspense is to cut every now and then to glimpses of the husband travelling towards the house. In the silent days, when the villain was coming, you always had the orchestra playing quickening music. You *felt* the menace. Well, you can still have that and keep the sense of the talk-scene going as well. And the result is that you don’t need to insist pictorially on the husband’s approach.

“I think I used about six feet of film out of the three hundred feet used in the sequence to flash to the husband. The feeling of approaching climax can be suggested by the music.

“It is in that psychological use of music, which, you will observe, they knew something about before talkies, that the great possibilities lie.

“It makes it possible to express the unspoken. For instance, two people may be saying one thing and thinking something very different. Their looks match their words, not their thoughts. They may be talking politely and quietly, but there may be a storm coming. You cannot express the mood of that situation by word and photograph. But I think you could get at the underlying idea with the right background music. It may sound far-fetched to compare a dramatic talkie with opera, but there is something in common. In opera quite frequently the music echoes the words that have just been spoken. That is one way music with dialogue can be used.

“*Waltzes from Vienna* gave me many opportunities for working out ideas in the relation of film and music. Naturally every cut in the film was worked out on script before shooting began. But more than that, the musical cuts were worked out too.

“Let me give you an example. As you probably know, *Waltzes from Vienna* tells the story of the conception, composition, and first performance of “The Blue Danube.” Obviously there has to be a long musical sequence when the piece is first played in public—one of the big scenes of the picture. In what I have been saying about music in films I have supposed the action to be the inspiration of

the music. But in this case the music had to inspire the action. All the camera has to work with is the orchestra, the conductor, and the audience. The human angle is the conductor—the younger Strauss—and the people of the story who are listening. So I arranged the cutting to match the rhythm of the music. It is difficult to describe in words. You must visualize the film moving in time with the music. In the slow passages the cutting is slow, when the music quickens the mood of the melody is followed by the quick cutting.

“Then, again, there is a good instance of the sort of thing I have aimed at in the scene when Strauss, a young baker, conceives the tune while at work. There the action—composed of simple things like bakers kneading dough and rolls falling into baskets—moves in time with the music which is forming in the young man’s brain.

“Film music and cutting have a great deal in common. The purpose of both is to create the *tempo* and mood of the scene. And, just as the ideal cutting is the kind you don’t notice *as* cutting, so with music.”

“You think then that cutting, montage, or whatever you like to call it, cannot do all that is required to establish the mood of a film, Mr. Hitchcock?”

“Exactly. I think cutting has definite limitations. Its best use is in violent subjects. That is why the Russians made such effective use of it, because they were dealing with violence, and they could pile shock on shock by means of cutting. But have you noticed that since they started to make quieter subjects, concerned with agriculture, etc., their montage has not been so noticeable or effective? If I am sitting here with you discussing the Five-Year-Plan, no amount of cutting can make a film of us dramatic because the scene is not dramatic. You cannot achieve quiet, restrained effects that way. But you might express the mood and tone of our conversation with music that would illuminate or even subtly comment on it.

“Please make it clear that I am not laying down laws on this subject. I am simply experimenting in theory as I have done in practice in *Waltzes from Vienna*. There are lots of things I have not made up my mind about. But I do think that any intelligent attempt to harness music to films is a step forward. Words and incidental noises and ‘song numbers’ are surely not all the sound track was invented for.

“The basis of the cinema’s appeal is emotional. Music’s appeal is to a great extent emotional, too. To neglect music, I think, is to surrender, wilfully or not, a chance of progress in film-making.”

FILM AND RADIO

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

Author of "Film"

THE last century seems to have produced an inflation of new branches of art. We are used to the idea that art is of the same venerable age as mankind. The beginnings of the dance, music, poetry, theatre and arts are veiled in the mist of a far-distant past. But glance at the last century. In 1830, photography was created; in 1920, radio; in 1930, sound-film. Are these all new arts?

If one examines the technique with which these new branches of art take effect, one discovers that, in spite of all the diversity of the technical apparatus and results, there is a surprising uniformity. One feels tempted to speak of subdivisions in an entirely new branch of art, which might be called *reproductive art*. This new art is not fundamentally different from other branches of art. There is a difference between the harmony of colours and the harmony of music; so is there a difference between the expressions of reproductive art and those of all other branches of art.

What is characteristic in reproductive art? It is the reproduction of reality. It is like the model taking the painter's brush, when the rays of light make impressions of light and dark; when the sound waves draw their lines on a waxen plate or on a strip of film. We know that this is not merely a process of mechanical reproduction comparable to a technical process such as printing, which has nothing to do with the creative activity of an artistic human mind.

Reproductive art requires creative genius. The fact that reality can copy itself is only a hint to us that we should search for the characteristics of the new art; its strength lies in the fact that it does copy, especially from a *selected point of observation* and with a *selected choice of subjects*. Camera and microphone permit us to retain the perceptions of our most important senses through the eye and the ear; and to transmit these perceptions through space and time. Photography and silent film leave out the auditory element. Radio and gramophone leave out the visual element. Sound-film combines both factors. Visual perception is far more complete and true to nature than auditory perception and, in consequence, the visual branches of reproductive art (photography and film) are closer to reality than the auditory branches, which command only part of the senses and are therefore limited in their means, at least as far as they try to express the position of sound in space and time. This

limitation in extensity is, however, fully compensated by richness in intensity. The spoken word may be exploited in many unique ways and, further, the art of conveying sound reaches its best expression in abstract and symbolic characters. Visual reproduction is not only more true to nature, it is more tied to it (Chaplin's art being an exception). Radio plays, on the contrary, can be so full of philosophical visions that they could not be satisfactorily produced on the stage (such as Goethe's "Faust," which, with all its symbolic characters, is more a radio play than a stage drama). The mechanical reproductions of visual and auditory perceptions thus lead to diverse results in film and radio, even though they have in common many important principles of form.

It was an exciting event when the discovery was made how to copy naturally visual and auditory perceptions with newly invented apparatus. That is the reason why we find in the early stages of each subdivision of reproductive art only one aspiration: to copy nature. They have, then, nothing to do with art. Gradually in the hands of artists who feel the possibilities of the new medium, the factors by which reproduction may become an art come into the foreground.

At first we are satisfied with a normal position which helps us to copy visual and auditory perceptions as accurately as possible. The camera is placed in the position which enables the object to be most clearly reproduced. The singer is placed before the microphone so that his voice will be neither too loud nor too soft—that the balance will be natural. In the next stage an attempt is made to vary the distance from the apparatus so as to create through the characteristic space between the object and the apparatus a personal relationship between the actor and the audience—the intimacy, for instance, of the close-up, the remoteness and softness of distance. The object is shown not only by itself, but also perspectively with its world, and relatively with its surroundings, and its fellows. All the objects which appear at the same time and place are each selected so that symbolic and universal relations will be created. Objects may be placed in characteristic settings and lighting, just as sounds and dialogue may be produced in radio and film studios by varying means, such as non-echoing rooms and muffled resounding of highly reflective walls. There was, at first, nothing but a quite ordinary sound-studio.

In the same way we find in the early stages of film and radio the uninterrupted passage of time, keeping to the principle: Unity of Time. The *Zäsur* only indicates, as on the stage, the end of a long-drawn-out scene. Then we realize that, at the film cutting-bench and before the microphone, a change of scene is made more easily than on the stage. Certain scenes are cut to a minimum.

Some are flashed for only a second (for instance, by Josef von Sternberg), and gradually the structure of time and space in the simple scene is interfered with by fitting in other scenes which happen at different places at the same time. Shots of the same place are taken from different angles by now. The unity of the plot becomes a mosaic of details.

Up to the present artistic adjustments have not been satisfactorily made in radio. It is not possible in radio to reproduce from different angles, but only from varying distances. But the primary reason is that radio has not yet made practical use of recording radio plays on a sound-track which could be cut and edited. As long as the actors continue to crowd round the microphone during broadcasting for scene changes, radio will not pass out of its first stages.

Film and photography have already reached a high standard, and, after exaggerated attempts to use the new effects, there follows a period of modification and simplification of the devices which produce the deepest impression on the audience. Radio, the youngest offspring of this new family of art, has not yet passed the initial stage, and is still treated, as were film and photography in their early stage of development, as a mere instrument of reproduction. Its artistic possibilities are still denied by many people, and little is being done to disprove their contentions. But the parallel of radio and film strengthens the hope that broadcasting will progress in the same way. So far as reproduction of reality is concerned, it will never reach the standard of richness and originality of the visual art. There is, however, every reason to hope that it will still become culturally significant.

TRANSLATED BY MARGRET KAPPELS.

ELSIE COHEN AND THE ACADEMY

THE ACADEMY Cinema, Oxford Street, which for the past three years has pioneered the Continental film movement in London, announces the resignation of Eric Hakim as managing director. Miss Elsie Cohen, who originated the international scheme at the Academy, which has become so widely known under her organisation, will continue under her own direction to present the most outstanding Continental films. Among those to be shown during the present season are *Anna and Elisabeth*, with Herta Thiele and Dorothea Wieck; *Prenez Garde à la Peinture*, adapted from "The Late Christopher Bean;" a new Lotte Reiniger silhouette film; and the first presentation to the British public of the cartoon films of the Hungarian artist, Szegedi Züts, who is now working in London.

SYNTHETIC AMERICA

ERIC M. KNIGHT

*Film Critic of "The
Philadelphia Public Ledger"*

As I sit in one of our American movie palaces, with the *de luxe* plush seats providing some minor balm, and watch the latest enamelled epic of American life and times float past in superficial perfection, I often wonder what the rest of the world is going to think of that picture. I wonder: "Do the girls in West Ham think we are like that? Do the lads in Lancashire imagine they are seeing us? Will Bordeaux and Mantua and Bombay and Melbourne come to the conclusion that America is as Hollywood shows it?"

It is almost with a shock that I realize that, of course, they must accept us as we show ourselves by now; the steady output of years must have convinced the world that the United States is much as it is shown on the films. Horrible thought! I rush to advise you that it isn't true—any more than the old conceptions about Frenchmen with pointed moustaches and high hats, Russians with beards and blouses, and Mexicans with knives and sneers.

May I point out that few lands know how to tell the truth about themselves. To reverse the medallion, let me announce that British films have failed, with monotonous regularity, to tell the rest of the world the truth about Britain. We've had, true enough, talking photographs of lots of your actors—who, I suppose, are the exact equivalent of our Broadway lads. What picture of Britain do they bring us? They, those actors, appear to us like a lot of top-hatted silly asses of exactly the type that Americans delight to scorn.

Have you ever sent us a picture that would allow an American to see a bit of Britain as you yourselves know it? Possibly Grierson's *Drifters* did; we have not seen that here. There was an Anthony Asquith short film which, for a brief moment, caught up some of the colour of a mist-draped moor. Beyond that, nothing! An American would need to visit Britain to find that it is not a country of pseudo-modernistic sets that look remarkably like our own just-as-shiny plasterwork from Hollywood.

Similarly, I should say that of all the great outpouring of American cinedramas not one in a hundred bears any grain of truth in its warped outlook. You see only cardboard conventions distorted with grease-paint outlooks; crooked cops, blatant gunmolls, senti-

mental detectives, face-slapping tough guys, saccharine-sentimented vaudeville heroes, wise-cracking gold-diggers, impudent youth, gorgeously gowned shopgirls. That, my friends, is not America.

Art is a parallel to truth, and there is much truth in the United States, truth that needs telling. For it is not monotonous, this live America you never see. It is alive, vivid and interesting. Moreover, this being a large country, it is variegated in its colour.

We have here the rolling valleys of the East, with the country people who ride and hunt much as in your own counties; we have the granite-strewn farms and hard accents of stern New England; the narrow monotony of the "Baptist belt" of the near Middle West; the South, where decadence and newly awakened life battle bitterly; the awesome flat lands and flat life of the wheat-belt; the semi-tropical vegetation and the hothouse ideas of California; the grime of Pennsylvania coal-fields, with bloody conflicts between miners and bosses; the tragic bleakness of manufacturing cities; the pure architecture of little old towns; the Creole overlay of New Orleans—I could go on for pages.

These, all widely variant, are the real America you do not see in American films—much to the despair of the sane and normal citizens of this land, who have deep and generous affection for their country.

There is not a phase of the "programme" film that manages to clutch at truth beyond that wise-crackery of the Broadway hanger-on which must, to you, seem typical American stuff. Even the music, such as it is, has no American quality to it—and by American I mean inherently belonging to this land. There is much jazz (which doesn't get into screen musicomedie), which is negroid. But the music you get in Hollywood films is almost purely Russian-Jewish. Meet our Berlins and Jolsons and Cantors and then you see it all—you know why—the minor wail, the crying blue, the "Mammy" caterwauling that springs from Jewish matriarch-worship. American songs really American? Not any more than a cantor's chanting is British. If you want real American songs we have them by the dozen. There is "Oh Suzannah," "Arkansas Traveller," "Money Musk," "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," "The Old Rock Candy Mountain," "Clementine." Dozens of native tunes that are part of the nation's life are unused.

In practically every part of the United States I have heard a song which starts:

My son Joshua, went to Philadelphia.

It is as well known, I should say, as "The Star-Spangled Banner." Yet it lies unrecorded. Or there is the plaintive charm of the real cowboy songs, such as "The Last Roundup," with its curiously intricate rhythm and its exhortation to:

Git along, little dogies, git along.

Dogies, I explain, lest a watchful proof-reader turn it to "doggies," are young cattle.

The tunes, songs, accents, speech, habits, dress, life and customs of the greatest part of America lie untouched, unreflected, by Hollywood. Why? Possibly because the screen is not the stage; the critical camera-eye won't allow the making-up of grease-paint actors into these rôles as the stage might. You must go out into the lands and film the people themselves. And Hollywood is much too occupied with production schedules ever to go farther away from Hollywood than a suburban location. Catalina Island for sea-shots is the farthest north in exploration for American films—and if this ignores completely the fisher-folk of Nova Scotia and Boston, or the oystermen of Connecticut and Long Island, no one knows except a few people who live in those latter places.

Of course, production of real pictures would take stamina and fortitude, and lots of it. We haven't got brave producers. We haven't a producer here who would dare to give the world a picture of the negro as anything but a musical-comedy figure of trite jollity. Who will film the tragedy of the American negro? No one—for not even our *Emperor Jones* just filmed independently is aught but a stage-drama with a celluloid coating.

The only film, as a type, that has any real authority is our much-scorned Western. At least there, if you have banality of plot, you have some of the stone and gravel and grassland of America thrown in as incidentals. But, remember, this is only a small portion of the United States, the cowboy West. Millions of Americans have never seen it—it is as far away from the millhands of Brockton, Massachusetts, and Connecticut as it is from the shipyard workers of the Tyneside. And it is dying so fast that it will be one with the rock in another decade.

Apart from Westerns, what films have been really American? Some of the "historicals," such as *The Covered Wagon* and *Cimarron*, have recreated the past. And what attraction there was in resuscitating a truth that was!

I am a Fugitive was a real film—if a bad one for export. It was an internal matter—an intramural attack on one of the flagrant injustices that flourish in this land. (The ignorance and cruelty of decadent whites in Georgia had long been attacked by newspapers of courage, such as the late "New York World.") The film was an odd affair for Hollywood to tackle and it raised polite Hades. I'm glad Britishers saw that; for even if it showed an ugly bit of American life, it showed, too, that there lives here the courage and desire to exterminate it. The Governor of Georgia was quite upset about it all.

What other film rang true? I suggest another: *State Fair*. Despite all the fake backgrounds, dunning shots and duped scenes concocted in Hollywood, this one almost caught the narrowness of Middle Western life. The live-stock contests, the canning awards, the tawdry amusement booths, the trotting-horse races, were getting close to the soil. If the picture wanted to get even closer it should have included those curious and distinctly American contests of hawg-calling and rolling-pin throwing. The first of those is won by the person whose dulcet yowls can call home a herd of hogs from the greatest distance; the second, open only to women, is judged more for accuracy than for mileage. Silly stuff? Outlandish, I admit. But that's what the people do, and I can't see that it's any sillier than rating the dexterity with which a man can beat rhythms with the tips of his shoes—or sing about his mammy as he kneels on one knee.

There is one more picture that is American and alive: the recently issued *She Done Him Wrong*, by Mae West, for Mae West and with Mae West. I wonder how I can explain her. I suppose the easiest way is to say that East is East and West is something else again.

Mae West has swept across the country. Will Hays ruled that she couldn't make a film called *Diamond Lil*, so she made a film in which she was Diamond Lou and issued it as a rose by another name. (Thus we obey Hays.)

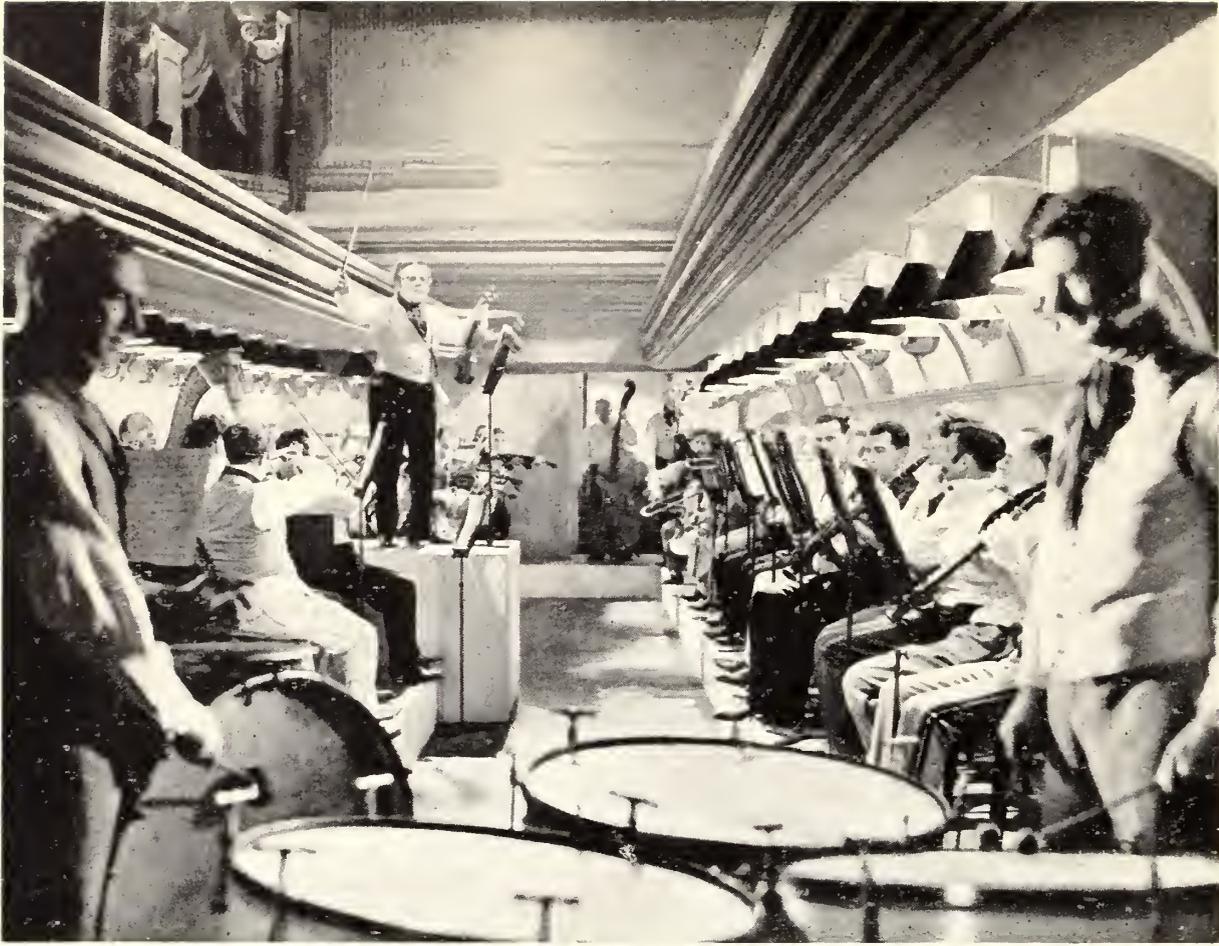
But it isn't the story that means anything. It is Mae West herself: beautiful, vulgar, plump and earthy. She has poundage and charm and a worldly-wise air. But it is her frank vulgarity that attracts. The very walk of her, the lift of a shoulder, are eloquently suggestive. And is this America? In part it is. At least, it is closer to the truth. So America goes wild over the woman. She upsets the silly cardboard convention that a woman is something with a Hollywood diet and a lamp-post silhouette. For once, instead of a mannikin, there is a real woman on the screen, as real as Marie Dressler and half her age. It is astounding—someone alive on the screen!

Mae West is not all America. She is a part, but a real part. We need the other parts revealed as eloquently—the millhand and miner and automobile-worker and farmer and oil-driller and cotton-cropper.

We are not a land of vaudeville actors, and it is only because vaudeville actors play so much a part of Hollywood life that Hollywood thinks they are life itself. There is a great America here—an America which, strange as it may seem to film watchers, is warm and alive, full of people whose feet are planted deeply in this land of ours. I'd like you to see them. But you won't. Not from feature films. If you want to see America, take it from the news-reels.



From "Zero de Conduite," a French film produced independently by Jean Vigo. It is an exposure of a type of provincial boarding school run for profit. The photography is by Boris Kaufman and Louis Berger.



From Alfred Hitchcock's forthcoming musical film "Waltzes from Vienna." A Tom Arnold production with Jessie Matthews, Fay Compton, Frank Vosper, and Edmund Gwenn in the cast.



SCREEN MAGAZINES

D. F. TAYLOR

IT is impossible to define Public Opinion or know "what the public wants," though we do know to-day that there is a growing audience who want to know, an audience who demand more in their relaxation than just entertainment. Financial crises and world economic collapses beset us, and affect us individually. Far from seeking an opiate, there is a large body of people who want to know more about this crazy, chaotic world.

The people cry for knowledge, and the producers give us entertainment. Traditionally they answer, "We know what the public wants; we don't want none of these 'ere *intellectuals*"—the stock answer that has met every innovation.

Through the screen magazine, the thin end of the wedge of knowledge could be given to the waiting audiences. To-day it is the lowest type of film produced. In form it owes much to "Tit-Bits" and "Answers," a speedy collection of odds and ends from here and there, designed to pass ten minutes and then to be forgotten. Its constant seeking after the odd and the curious satisfies the un-intelligent lust for curiosity, but achieves nothing.

The present chief operators in the field are *Pathé Gazette* and *Eve's Film Review*, the *Ideal Cinemagazine*, and the *Paramount Pictorial*, with the *réchauffé* of five-year-old newsreel, the *Kinograph Tonereel*. Searching crazily for the strange and the curious, they overlook the solid jobs of review waiting on their own doorsteps. Their formula never changes. Week in and week out we are treated to a dash of industry, a dash of beauteous country-side, two dashes of fashion and a lacing of cabaret to give the reel a kick. I was once told that the North demands the cabaret. This particular statement that certain areas demand a low form of entertainment should have been debunked by now. It is not what the public want in those areas; it is what the exhibitor wants—an entirely different affair. It is an insult to the North to suggest that they demand legs and lingerie above all else. The theory that the exhibitor knows what the public wants should have been exploded before. From conversations up and down the country with exhibitors I have never yet found one who could give a true estimate of the public taste in his district. He is usually far more concerned with the mess the audience makes on his carpets than the type of film he shows. He is more concerned with the pea-nut audience on Thursday and the orange-peel audience on Saturday to think about their reactions.

Pathé, once an old and respected name in the film business, is still content to trade on that respect. It certainly cannot hope to sell its product on any other grounds. If you ever have the misfortune to sit through one with a *Paramount Screen Souvenirs* in the same programme, you will see that the technique of 1910 lives on. Half their material comes from America—cheap oddments and throw-outs of the newsreels, and apparently a fourth-hand “dupe.” *Pathé’s* home shooting never conceives anything beyond a long shot and a close-up; in fact it is doubtful whether the word “cutting” has filtered through to that gloomy stone house in Wardour Street. If you wish to put your soul through fifteen minutes of purgatory, see the latest issue—a music-hall turn, shot against stage props, with only two close-ups to vary the monotony of a long shot, the turn doing gags which are green with age on the halls. American children go into the air to learn geography; a good subject if properly treated, but here mauled about for the commentator to make facetious “cracks.” Herman Darewski teaching us a new game for Christmas parties. There were some other items, but their nonentity escaped my notice. That is Wardour Street’s idea of food for your mental pabulum.

It is difficult to decide whether Paramount take their magazine, *Paramount Pictorial*, seriously. I am inclined to the belief that it is just one of those things which happen in a big company. Sporadically someone tries to do something with it, and occasionally there is a good subject. But inevitably we get the formula: fashions, travel, cabaret, oddities—the rot runs deep when Paramount have so little originality.

Out of the muck and rut of “dupe” and unintelligence the work of Andrew Buchanan shines like a beacon light. Within his formulated limits he persistently turns out first-rate technical jobs. Every week the *Ideal Cinemagazine* is fresh and contains something stimulating. Buchanan cannot be judged on content value, though he has done everything possible within the limits of the magazine. He has one of the few cutting senses in England. The only charge that can be brought against him is a leaning to sophistication; his reel smacks too much of the purlieus of Bond Street. He pursues the odd and the curious with an energy that could be better applied. Occasionally he slips in an item which is of real value. Some of his documentary items approximate to the ultimate form of the magazine. He tried to make a revolution once when he took over the *Gaumont Mirror*, which in the old days ran *Pathé Gazette* pretty close. He tried to create a serious magazine containing documentary, talks, science, art, without the cement of a punning commentary. Unfortunately this one ray of hope in the field was scotched after a few weeks, just as it was beginning to formulate itself and stand on its feet.

Buchanan's facetious commentaries have become a byword, pandering to the old idea that your material, because it is not story, can have no interest unless it is made into entertainment by the addition of comic titles or commentary.

And that is the fundamental root trouble that applies to all shorts—documentary, newsreels, magazines, travelogues, sport-lights. They must be entertainment, and by entertainment our movie magnates would have you understand emotional appeal. They deny anyone the right to think, they deny us the right to intellectual entertainment.

Yet, through the magazine, we have an aid to the creation of a socially conscious cinema. It has a journalistic format, and as such it is of value. We want to elevate it from the ranks of "Tit-Bits"; we want to make it a weekly review of the world—something that is not cheap like "Tit-Bits," nor highbrow like the "Week-End Review." It should become a review with a definite status, a newspaper make-up, a political policy. And if so, how can it become socially useful?

It should maintain a close liaison with the newsreels. It could reconstruct from the newsreel, with added material, the motivation of political events; it would cover current social problems—slums, unemployment, world exchanges, unbalanced production. Industry would not be important for the curious things that are made in its factories, but for its developments. The wheels of industry begin to turn again—giant new machines to relieve manual labour; how the machine is replacing the hand in modern industry is of far more importance than the making of a violin, or the building of a piano. New inventions and the developments of science are far more interesting than the peculiar behaviour of certain substances under experiment. There is an interesting possibility in visual reviews of films and plays. New theories of education can be more vividly interesting than child prodigies. Fashions only become of importance in their social aspects: show the housewife how to make a dress for five bob—don't let's hob-nob with Mayfair. New social services, postal developments, new aspects of safety first, analytical reviews of sport—these are all possible subjects. Why not special regional items, new methods of agriculture and the discoveries of research for the farming areas, indications of useful leisure employments for the industrial areas?

According to formula and rigid preconceived ideas the above suggestions are not entertainment, but ask yourself what you understand by the word "entertainment." It has unfortunate associations: we need a recasting of meaning.

COMMERCIAL DOCUMENTARY

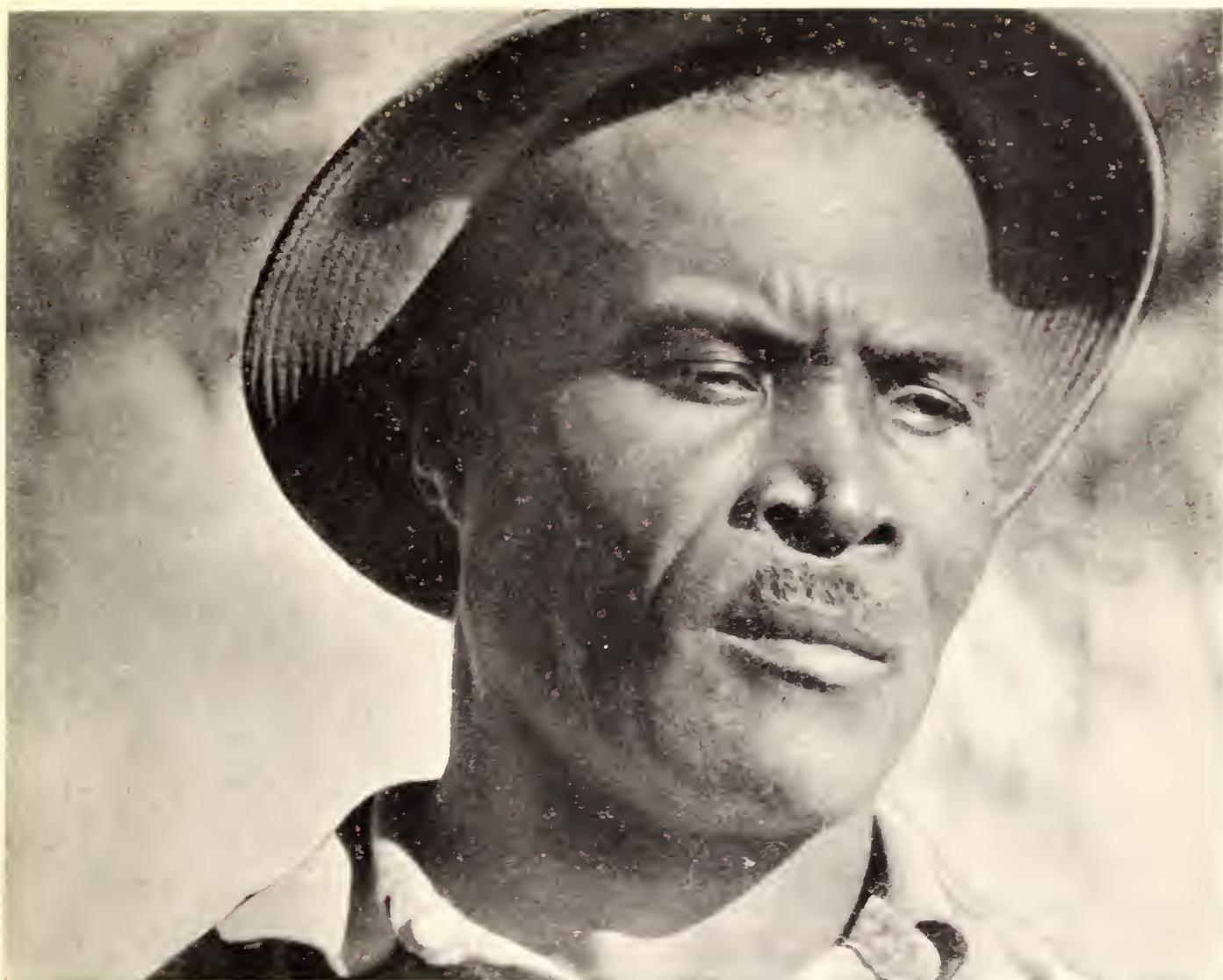
H. BRUCE WOOLFE

*Formerly of British Instructional Films
and now Chief of G.-B. Instructional*

WHAT IS a documentary film? Some people declare it is any film that is non-fictional. With this definition I disagree. In the first place, I know many films that are non-fictional which, in my opinion, are not documentary. Secondly, I maintain that if a film contains fictional elements it does not necessarily become declassified as documentary. On the contrary, I believe that the addition of judicious fiction may considerably increase both the æsthetic value and the point of a film that in the main deals with a non-fictional subject. Further, I maintain that, to get the greatest appreciation from the greatest number of people, judicious fiction is necessary. If I were permitted to apply the word documentary to plays, I should describe several of Shakespeare's histories as documentary; and Shakespeare, being no mean craftsman, never hesitated to employ fiction when dealing with a documentary subject.

The documentary film at its best should depict phases of life and jobs of work as they are done by some portion of our people. By passing this knowledge on to other sections of the community it is definitely doing good work and making a contribution to our national life. By getting knowledge of how other sections of our countrymen work and live we are getting a better understanding of their outlook. No other medium can do this in anything like the same way as the film. I believe that documentary films should be strictly national and that only by being so will they be welcomed by other nations. I do not believe in internationalism in films, having seen the results that have attended the production of bi-lingual, multi-lingual and foreign co-operation productions in the past. Internationalism in Europe during the last ten years has had no better result than has attended internationalism in films. Likewise I believe that documentary films should show the efforts made by all classes in the advancement of our country and not be confined to one class only.

With these ideas firmly implanted in my mind as the result of experience and observation, I have recently put into production a film that will deal with interdependence within the Empire. It shows how co-operation is essential between the Mother Country and the Dominions, and how, in furthering that co-operation, Brains



From "Windmill in Barbados."

Production: John Grierson

Direction and Photography:

Basil Wright



Leslie Howard and Heather Angel in "Berkeley Square," an adaption of the successful play. Fox Film production.

evolved a mighty scheme, Capital financed it, and Labour carried it out. None of the three could have done anything alone. In order to secure proper continuity and personal interest it is necessary to incorporate elements of fiction here and there, keeping to the spirit and adding to the point. The film will be directed by Paul Rotha. I have had arguments with him over this fiction business and have given way on certain points, but he has admitted the principle and we are in agreement as to the method of treatment of the theme.

To make documentary films successful, one must believe in one's subject absolutely. Sincerity cannot be grafted on to a film; it must exist before a foot is shot. If that sincerity holds out until the end of a production, it shows on the screen. I cannot explain how or why; it is one of those intangible things that make the screen so powerful and so fascinating. It is useless to proclaim this in Wardour Street, because it is heresy to believe that a million dollars doesn't always show on the screen. I believe that sincerity on the screen is worth more than a million dollars and is much more likely to declare its presence.

I have been making documentary films for several years. One of my earliest efforts was made twelve years ago and was the record of the campaign in Palestine entitled *Armageddon*. It was passed as true by General Allenby and the Army Council. On its completion I showed it to every film renter in Wardour Street; they would have none of it! Because it contained no love interest it was suspect. The small capital of the company I was then responsible for was all sunk in this picture, and the position was serious. Something had to be done; no renter would take it; so a renting company had to be formed to exploit it. This was done and *Armageddon* was launched. It was eventually booked to eight times its cost. It was followed by other films of a similar type, all financially successful. But still the mentality of Wardour Street did not change.

A short while ago I made another documentary film and was informed that it would have been scrapped had it not been for the fact that the trade show had been booked. It was shown to the Trade and eventually booked to over a thousand theatres in this country, besides being sold to the Dominions. Still no change on the Wardour Street front.

Recently I was responsible for another documentary film which on being viewed was returned to me with the remarks, "Bored us stiff; no personal appeal; cut it down to eight hundred feet and it might go as a fill-up." I insisted on contractual obligations and the film was distributed, not with great enthusiasm or a deal of publicity, as can be imagined. It secured three runs, totalling eleven weeks, in the West End of London and has done well in the provinces. So much for Wardour Street!

Advertising agents tell us that if you have a good article and shout about it long enough and loud enough, you are certain of a response. I believe this is true. Although I have not shouted very loud, I have been declaring my beliefs for quite a long time and have at last evoked a response.

The Gaumont-British group have financed a company, G-B. Instructional, to devote itself to the production of documentary films, for a period of five years. Farsightedness and courage and belief in the future of the documentary film are necessary to put in hand a proposition of this description. By their action in this matter Gaumont-British have shown they have the courage to back that belief with finance, which is the crucial test. The new company will start under favourable conditions with a fixed determination to do its utmost to justify the belief reposed in it.

CINEMA LIBRARY

FILMCRAFT. By Adrian Brunel. (London: Newnes, 3s. 6d.) This book is not concerned with the technicalities of camera work and film processing, but with the actual production of films, from the scenario department to the editing bench. It goes through every phase of film production, even giving what so many writers of film handbooks have neglected, a detailed analysis of a given scenario, showing the why and wherefore of the inclusion and rejection of certain shots.

The inclusion of twelve appendices by experts is a happy idea, and special mention must be made of those by Ivor Montagu on "Creation," John Orton on "Direction," and Reginald Beck on "Sub-Standard Editing," in the last of which the writer emphasises the point that reversal stock can never be as satisfactory in the cutting-room as the negative-positive film. There is a glossary of film terms and several illustrations. L.

BROTHERS OF THE SNOW. By Luis Trenker. (London: Routledge, 7s. 6d.) If Trenker could write a book as well as he can make a film his autobiography would be twice as interesting. As it is, we never become interested in his early life, and his chapters on film-making are only superficially interesting. Hollywood's hot-houses, we are glad to know, however, have no attraction for Trenker the Alpinist, who longed for his snows throughout his visit to California. The book is worth reading to learn that Alpine snow is an antidote to Hollywood dope.

Notices of two novels from which films have been adapted—THE CHILD MANUELA (*Maedchen in Uniform*) and THE STRANGER'S RETURN—are held over until the next number.

THE FILM ABROAD

A SOVIET WRITER TAKES TO CINEMA

ALEXANDER WERTH

ONE OF THE latest Russian recruits to Western cinematography is Eugene Zamiatin, the brilliant novelist and playwright, whose mind is perhaps a little too ironical for the land of Five-Year enthusiasms. During the War he was in England building icebreakers for the Russian navy, and then, when the Revolution broke out, he returned to Russia to become one of the leading literary lights of the new régime. His output is small in quantity, but high in quality, and his super-concise prose, which is not so much narrative as a series of visual flashes, had many followers and imitators, both in the literary and in the cinematic field. But Zamiatin never quite adapted himself to Soviet conditions. There was a preciousness in his style which was a trifle "æsthetic"; his quaint theatrical fantasias of mujik humour were too indolent for the shock-brigade mind; some of his stories had too much of the human, and not enough of the collective interest; and when he wrote a fantasia with the tactless title "We"—a vision of the world's sublimely mechanical future—the Soviet critics thought that he had better be funny about something else, and the book was published in America.

Zamiatin is a good and loyal Soviet citizen, but with a touch of rebellious individualism; and about eighteen months ago he turned up in Paris to renew his long-standing acquaintance with the "rotten West." He seemed to like it, and has not gone back to Russia yet. But unlike Ehrenburg, who is in his element at Montparnasse, he has given up writing books until he goes back to Russia, and spends his time producing plays and writing articles and scenarios. His comedy, "The Flea," which is still going strong at the Moscow Art Theatre (where it was first produced in 1926), and which is an ingenious attempt to reconstruct Russian popular comedy, with a touch of *commedia dell' arte*, will be produced in Paris after an initial run at Brussels. It may go to London afterwards. As for articles, he writes for Barbusse's "Monde," "Europe," and other papers of more or less Bolshevik or drawing-room Bolshevik tendencies. He gave me lunch at his little furnished flat at Auteuil the other day. Holy Russia! Borsh, kasha, minced "cutlets," black

bread, kissel and vodka—White-Russian, Paris-made vodka. And after lunch we had cardboard-tube cigarettes stuffed with caporal. Zamiatin is forty-five, perhaps forty-eight, clean-shaven and almost English-looking, but for the sly mujik twinkle in his eyes.

“So you have taken to scenario-writing?”

“No, I am just going on with it. I had already worked on three films in Russia, where I took to scenario-writing in self-defence, as it were. It happened like this. There is a story of mine called ‘Northern Love,’ a bit Knut Hamsun’ish, full of Laplanders and reindeer. Ivanovsky, who afterwards did *Decembrists*, produced it. He shot most of the scenes at Alexandrovsk, on the Murman coast, and there is some glorious Arctic scenery in the film. It was a great success in the hey-day of the silent film. When I say that I had to act in self-defence, it was simply because they gave my story to one of their sworn-in scenario hacks; so I had to take it away from him.

“With my next film the very opposite happened. You know my story, ‘The Cave’—it has been translated three or four times into English; it is the story of the ex-bourgeois couple living in their little room—their cave—in starved and frozen civil-wartime Leningrad, and worshipping the gluttonous god of the cave—the stove. A symbol of life, as it were. I started writing the scenario; but when I saw what they were doing with it I gave it up. My story was the tragedy about two ordinary human beings; they turned it into a propaganda film about the ‘rotting ex-upper classes’—though Ermler, I admit, is a pretty able producer.

“At present they are working on my third scenario; this one is a talkie. *Iola* is its name—the story of a fishing-boat and of the man who loved it. It shows the hard life of the fishermen on the Arctic Ocean, and the hero gets drowned in an attempt to save the boat for which he had worked all his life. In this film, too, there is some good Arctic scenery. The last I heard was that the Moscow factory were still working on the film. It is a slow business.”

“What about your film work here?”

“That’s a different matter. When I first arrived I tried to work for Gaumont, but found them—what shall I say?—too inartistic. Then I wrote a scenario for Chaliapine on the subject of ‘Stenka Razin,’ a romantic, revolutionary affair, based on the folklore about the great robber chief of the Volga, and at the same time the hero of the first great peasant uprising. I sold it to Vandor Film, but after *Don Quixote* they are not in a hurry to do any more Chaliapine for the present. I am also writing a film version of my play *Attila*; a spectacular theme, and a mighty significant one at a time when the Western world is about to be swept away by the Slav and Germanic hordes.

“But my biggest cinema job since leaving Russia has been my scenario of *Anna Karenina*; Pathé-Nathan have bought it, and Ozep, the producer of the *Brothers Karamazov*, will start on it in the spring, as soon as he is finished with Zweig’s *Amok*. They are talking of Lil Dagover or Yvonne Printemps for the title-rôle. I admit that the holy shade of Tolstoy was an awful bother. You see, in turning the novel into a film I simply had to cut out all the non-visual matter, and, naturally, Levin, the Tolstoyan hero with his grasshopper philosophizing, had to be thrown overboard at once. I limited myself to the Karenin-Vronsky triangle. The dialogue had to be cut out, for both the dialogue and the psychology had to be translated into cinematic terms. The thing had to be visual and dynamic. The method of flash-presentation instead of narrative exposition was the method that you will find in all my books; so the medium was familiar enough to me. The dialogue is, naturally, also reduced to bare essentials, to mere significant flashes. There is one thing, however, which will infuriate the literary fetishists. There is plenty of movement—continuous movement—in the film; the visual material is good; and a good job will be made of the race-course, in particular. But you will remember that shortly after Anna’s first meeting with Vronsky there is a lapse of one year, at the end of which he becomes her lover. That one year’s courtship is not described in Tolstoy. Cinematically, you cannot convey the lapse of a whole year; and to convey this passage of time I inserted a number of flashlight episodes, showing the progress of Vronsky’s courtship. I know they will cry sacrilege. But what can you do? On the screen things have to be *shown*, not *told*. In a way, all my literary work has been cinematic; I never *explained*; I always *showed* and *suggested*.

“And, after all,” Zamiatin concluded, with a twinkle of self-satisfaction, “you know where Soviet cinema learned its method and its basic idea. Was it not from the flashily obscure Soviet books of the early twenties? *Quorum pars magna fui.*”

PARIS, December 1933.

“ZERO DE CONDUITE”

JEAN VIGO’s film, *Zero de Conduite*, which has been attacked by the French censors, is an exposure of life in a provincial boarding school. The heroes are delicate children badly handled by greedy tyrants. Finally the boys rebel, and the mutiny gives the film much of its excitement and action. The film is a courageous and outspoken independent production in which Vigo had as his collaborators the Belgian cineaste Henri Storck, the composer Maurice Jaubert, and the photographers Boris Kaufman and Louis Berger. L. P.

THE FILM IN SOUTH AFRICA

H. R. VAN DER POEL

SOUTH AFRICA has probably had a fair share of the outstanding films of the world. Perhaps it was in the days of the Swedish Biograph and Nordisk films that the public first began to take notice. One remembers seeing Emil Jannings in *Anne Boleyn*. There are recollections of a number of the audience leaving before the end when *The Golem* was shown at the then foremost cinema in Cape Town; *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* being shown in the City Hall (the trade evidently did not want it); Stiller's *Hotel Imperial*, Lubitsch's *Forbidden Paradise*, Dupont's *Vaudeville* proving box-office successes. So were to a certain extent *Nanook and Grass*. On the other hand, Chaplin's *Woman of Paris*, Pabst's *Crisis*, *Jeanne Ney*, Flaherty's *Moana*, Grierson's *Drifters*, ran almost unnoticed in suburban houses or the cinema tea-rooms. Few recognised *The Street of Sorrows* as being what was left of Pabst's *Freudlose Gasse* with Garbo. The only Russian films worth mentioning were *Mother* and *Earth*. The silent era ended with the last of the Ufa specials, *Homecoming*, *Hungarian Rhapsody*, *The Wonderful Lie*, and *Pitz Palu*.

Whereas in the silent days one saw what was probably the pick of the world's films, the trade has made no attempt to introduce the outstanding Continental sound films. In view of the fact that German is almost invariably the foreign language taught at South African schools and universities, this is surprising.

Le Million, probably brought out as an experiment, was fairly successful. A significant feature of the sound era is the rapid headway made by British films as compared with the American product. The films from the Gainsborough studios in particular have proved popular successes. *Sunshine Susie* was no doubt as big a family success as elsewhere. Among the shorts *Ideal Cinemazine* is easily the favourite. *With Cobham to Kivu* was received with much enthusiasm. We have, however, not seen any of Anthony Asquith's work since *A Cottage on Dartmoor*.

There is not a single theatre in the Union showing consistently films which have not been made with an eye on the box-office. The Cape Film Society, news of which already has appeared in *Cinema Quarterly*, has revived some of the outstanding films of the silent era. Their chief difficulty is the supply of suitable films. The outstanding film of the current season has been *Maedchen in Uniform*. Fragments of Iven's *Zuiderzeewerkem*, *Phillips-Radio*, Oscar Fischinger's *Filmstudie No. 7*, and Clair's *The Italian Straw Hat* have also been shown.

With a vast native population, the South African censors are faced with unusual difficulties. *Potemkin* was prohibited by the Customs. *The Blue Angel* was banned, while *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was passed for exhibition to European adult audiences. Strange things happen, although it is difficult to know whether the censors or the professional cutters are to blame. An instance is provided by *Pitz Palu*. On seeing the film for the second time, a few days after the *première*, one was astounded to find that a most important sequence had been eliminated.

Local production is at present confined to news, publicity or travel shorts. Earlier productions included some of Rider Haggard's novels. Probably the only significant South African production was *Die Voortrekkers*, produced by Harold Shaw in collaboration with the historian, Gustaf Preller, for African Film Productions. Based on historical events in the early pioneer days, *Die Voortrekkers* was, in some respects, a forerunner of *The Covered Wagon*. It differed in this respect, however, that only a few of those who took part were professionals. The cast included hundreds of natives from the kraals and mine compounds. *Die Voortrekkers* is unique in South African film production, and is still being shown throughout the country on the occasion of certain national celebrations.

Sub-standard production of documentary or experimental films is, as far as is known, non-existent. There are no societies for purely documentary or experimental work. Apparatus is expensive, although the dealers seem to be doing well. One surmises that a good deal of 16 m.m. stock is consumed every year for making family movies, with perhaps many attempts at aping Hollywood. The only important production on record is Professor Compton's document, *National Parks in America*. There is a rich field for documentary work still unexplored. The farmers' co-operatives, labour settlements, the mines, even the conditions created by the extreme drought, from which a large area of the agricultural districts is suffering at present, provide almost unlimited scope for documentary work.

While it may not be unusual to find Trenker's *Doomed Battalion* with only a half-filled house and, at the same time, crowds flocking round the corner to see Constance Bennett in *Bought*, and although the film critics may think Marion Gering (*Twenty-four Hours*) one of the outstanding women directors, the cinema is progressing in South Africa.

The fact that the founders of the Cape Film Society include prominent artists and educationalists while the majority of the members are people who have probably never been movie star worshippers, is not without significance.

MISCELLANY

PUDOVKIN ON SOUND

JOHN GRIERSON

PUDOVKIN sums it up by saying that we Occidentals have failed to use sound dramatically. We have not yet learned to make sound an essential factor in our film construction. Our dialogue is derivative of the stage, our songs of the music hall, our recitals of the lecture room, our natural sound of melodrama; and sound film seldom conveys any fuller sense of the object than mute film did before it. A worse sense if anything, for dialogue has depraved the sense of action. Pudovkin generalises perhaps too readily; forgetting, or not knowing, the split choruses of Lubitsch and Clair, the unemployment sequence of *Three-cornered Moon*, the gossip sequence of *The Night of June 13th*, and the other occasional ingenuities of our technique. But on the whole he is right. We do not use sound to develop the art we discovered with silent cinema. We use it so much for its derivative values—in dialogue, in interlude—that it slows our pace, makes image and sequence of image incidental to literary meaning, and diminishes the peculiar power of the screen.

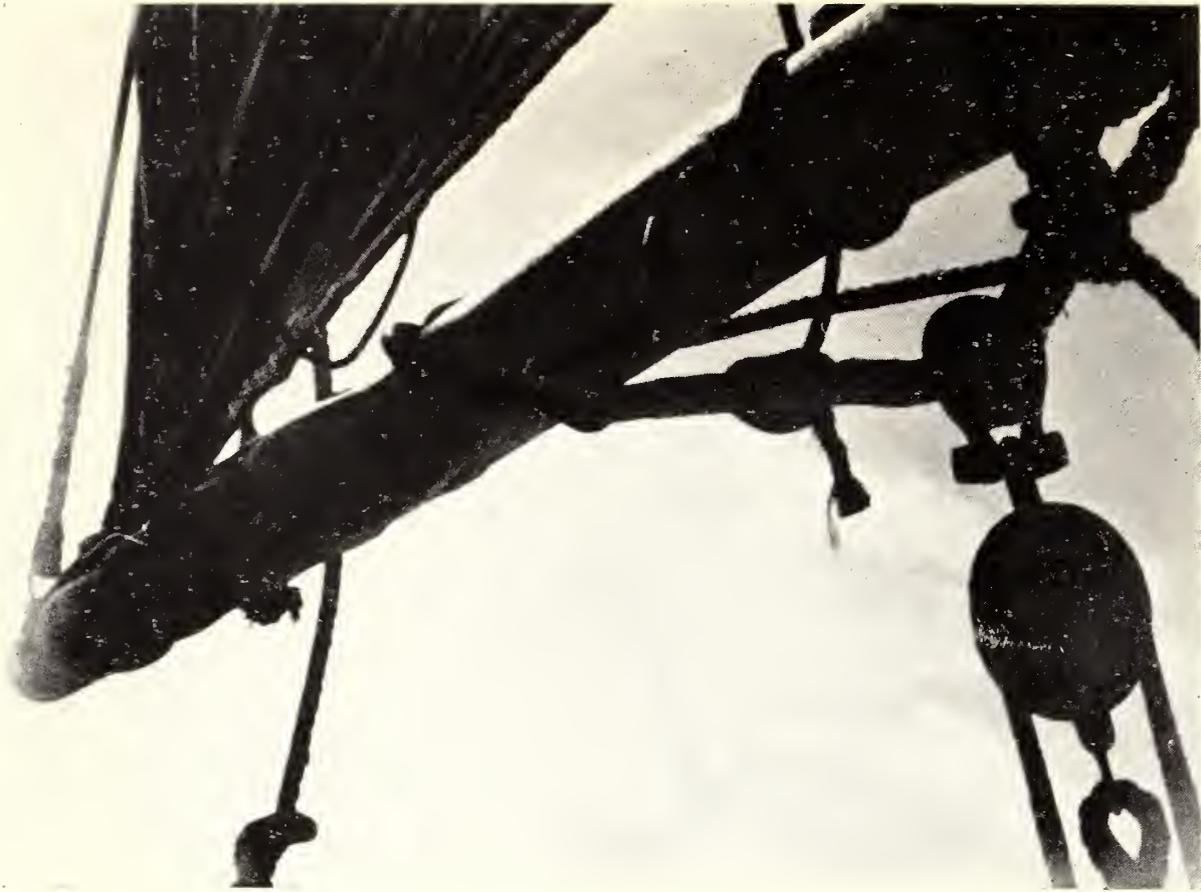
Much of Pudovkin's theory, as set out in the new chapters of "Film Technique" (London: Newnes, 3s. 6d.), is no more than common sense; and we hardly need a special discourse on asynchronism (not even the longer word explains it) to tell us that the sound should complement the mute and not merely repeat it. The first function of sound, says Pudovkin (or his translators), is to "augment the potential expressiveness of the film's content." It widens the scope of the film; it allows more things to be said; and more variously; and more shortly. The sound strip and the silent must each follow its own rhythmic course. The synchronous use of sound is only "exceptionally correspondent to natural perception."

In so far as Pudovkin is exclusively interested in story values (he always is in his theory, if not in his films) his examples of asynchronism are curiously shallow. He thinks of a town-bred man in a desert accompanied by city noises; of a cry for help which silences



Two shots from Pudovkin's new sound-film, "Deserter."





Two stills from "Granton Trawler," a short film made by John Grierson.



the natural sound of traffic and takes its place; of a total cessation of sound in a period of tension; and, in general, he makes a great ado of the difference between objective fact and its subjective interpretation by his characters. This, of course, is a sufficient gambit for an elementary dissertation on sound, and it is proper in Bolsheviks to regard us as imbeciles. But the interplay of subjective-objective is not a sufficient theoretical platform for sound film if we for a moment imagine the orchestrational possibilities of a complementary Bach or Beethoven. There is only passing excitement in the notion of a sound film "made correspondent to the objective world and man's perception of it together, where the image retains the image of the world, while the sound strip follows the changing rhythm of the course of man's perceptions; or vice versa" . . . only passing excitement when the two might so easily go off the earth together.

Such subjective-objective distinction may be real from the characters' point of view, but it is unreal from the artist's point of view. For him all elements of sound or mute are materials which together—together orchestrated—create his transfigured reality. They do not interpret as across a barrier, but are images together—give a meaning together—in a common recreated world. Mute and sound may swell together in a single symphony; silent images may join with sound images in a single poetry; a Greek chorus in sound, whether in formalised *vers libres* or in documentary bits and pieces, may join with narrative mute in a single recital. It is only misleading to make one a special interpretation of the other; sound film is thereby reduced to the wheezy psychological mechanics of people like Ibsen.

One should not puncture a man's theory by his own creative example, but *Deserter* is a better account of Pudovkin on sound than these chapters under review. The trouble with Pudovkin is that he performs like a poet and theorises like an elementary school teacher. As a theoretician, indeed, he very successfully makes inexplicable the very mature beauties he, as a creator, represents. How on a subjective-objective theory can he explain (a) the chorus of steamer whistles which attends his procession of ships (they are both orchestrations of perception); (b) his waltz-time accompaniment of waltz-timed traffic cops (they are both fancifications of perceived reality); (c) the triumphant march which accompanies his defeated street demonstration (they are both mounted in processional); (d) his cutting of rivetting machines into workers' applause (they are both rhetorical)? These are the high lights of sound accompaniment as he uses it, and it would be false analysis to say that the accompaniment in any one of these cases is an interpretation of the mood or meaning of the mute (or vice

versa). The effect they give is given together, the interpretation is a single interpretation. They are not two separate rhythms—or they ought not to be—but one single rhythm in which sound and mute are just so much imagistic raw material. The black and the white notes (the “Oban Times” said it more wisely than Pudovkin) must be played upon with an equal facility.

THEATRE AND CINEMA

IN ADDITION to the reissued “Film Technique” there has been published a short article by Pudovkin on “Acting—the Cinema *v.* the Theatre,” in the October issue of “The Criterion” (London: Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.). In it Pudovkin restates his theory that “the man before the ciné-camera must behave differently than the man behind the footlights,” and emphasises that the value of real material to the cinema has not disappeared with the arrival of the sound film. His theories will be more fully considered in an article in a forthcoming number, in which C. R. Jones will discuss the difference between theatre and cinema.

AIRMAN'S WORLD

FOR CENTURIES our outlook has been conditioned by an earthly existence and our sense of space governed by contact with the surface of the earth. The advent of the aeroplane and airship has destroyed all this. Mr. Supf* seeks to express in words and photographs some idea of this new world above us, and to a limited extent he has been successful. The text is composed largely of extracts from the diaries and log-books of famous pilots—including Byrd, Lindbergh, Cobham, Pluschow, Mittelholzer, Udet—who write with first-hand knowledge. Their remarkable descriptions read more convincingly than the author's sentimental reminiscences, perhaps because they are roughly jotted down and vividly impressionistic. It is true that when travelling through the air a completely new attitude is obtainable, a sense of freedom and vastness which is impossible to the dweller on land. The majesty of clouds, the drama of storm, the hugeness of the sea cannot be appreciated unless an aerial view is forthcoming; and once that new emotion has been experienced it is difficult to return to an old outlook. The illustrations are an interesting collection, but it is regrettable that they are not better reproduced both in quality and size.

P. R.

* In “Airman's World” (London: Routledge, 10s. 6d.)

* WE TURN TO HISTORY

FROM the clangorous and peptonized horror of American civilization the camera is turning to the gracious beauty of a romantic past. Gangsters give place to barons, showgirls to royal mistresses. The chattering of the machine-gun will no longer spit across the soundtrack; the screen will be filled with the patterns of epee and sword. Thus we may escape into a past seen through the rose-dim spectacles of nostalgia for a saner world.

But that gives no renewed invigoration for the struggle against values which would reduce our world to a shallow farce, a struggle to make strength and intellect and beauty the common heritage of mankind. The past is a tissue as complex and as splendid as the present; but the interpretations of the past are not the meanings we can put to the same things to-day. We solve our ancestors' problems; for those of to-day we have no precedent. Of what importance to us is finesse in love-making—the deceptions of an immoral game of sex played among the dust-smear'd guilt of baroque obscenities—or a code which loosed slaughter and rape over Badajoz and Drogheda, or a sincerity which lit the fires of persecution throughout Europe?

Gin and kisses become romantic in periwigged heroes. Make gin and loveless kisses harmless by every means. The audience cannot project the unclean powder and curls of the eighteenth century or the splashed and dirty velvets of Henry VIII into its daily life. But a vicarious enjoyment of "selfishness, cruelty, ingratitude and sensuality, and the grossness of the King's manners," to quote a review, will not teach an audience self-respect. Historical films will not contribute the slightest inspiration to the people of to-day. Romance is not a value of life. It is an attitude of escape from reality. Reality for us is our civilization, with its amazing material progress, its striving for a clearer vision and a new scale of values to replace those destroyed by the war. We escaped into that stabler world in *Cavalcade*; a mild regret—what else was left? Let us have films which keep our world before us; the faith of the propagandist and the honesty of documentary side by side with American satire. Only when we cannot grasp the complexity of our civilization, the achievements of which we are so proud, as well as the flaws which deface them, will we turn to romance for escape. History is the stuff of our past; but the romantic history of the film is the dressing up of a child who suffers from inferiority, an unworthy escape from ourselves and our civilization.

THOMAS SIMMS.

* A reply to Philip Lindsay. See "The Camera Turns on History," *Cinema Quarterly*, Autumn, 1933.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

FORSYTH HARDY

MORE OBVIOUSLY than usual, the films of the quarter emphasise the cinema's dependence on literature and the theatre for its material. So large a proportion of films are adapted either from plays or novels that we have unconsciously come to look on this wholesale derivation as an accepted practice, and are in danger of losing sight of the fact that it represents cinema's least creditable aspect as an independent entertainment and a distinctive art. Because cinema can never have any real prestige among the arts while its productions are mere adapted versions of themes already expressed elsewhere. The greatest plays are not dramatised versions of books; and the greatest films are not photographs of stage plays.

It would not be intelligent, however, to ignore the reasons for this consistent derivation. As always, the chief are commercial. A popular play, novel, or silent film has already an assured public, advance publicity, and general goodwill—all valuable box-office assets. So many films are needed so quickly that the producers are timorous of new ideas, and prefer ready-made material created for other forms of expression and tried and tested elsewhere. Also, the number of authors and artists who understand and use the film as a medium for expressing their ideas is still small, though it is probably larger than the film companies allow us to realise, and the supply of original material for the screen cannot be great. But these reasons are not sufficient to justify the continued and increased dependence of the cinema on literature and the theatre, not sufficient to excuse the film producer's lack of courage to tackle or sponsor the task of creation.

It is not impossible, of course, for a good play to be used as the basis of a good film. *Maedchen in Uniform* was a good film, not because it was a photograph of a good play, but because Leontine Sagan expressed the theme in a form which was essentially of the cinema. Similarly with Milestone's *The Front Page*. And this quarter has produced *Three-cornered Moon*, adapted from a play by Gertrude Tonkonogy. This, though it retains the theatrical qualities of amusing situation and clever dialogue, is close to the cinema in its intimate observation of everyday life, and Elliot Nugent has given it a unity of mood and movement only possible on the screen. Not



From "S.O.S. Iceberg," a Universal Production.
The photography is by Hans Schneeberger and R. Angst.

From "La Maternelle," a French film of child life.
Directed by Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein.
A Photosonor production.



since *The Royal Family of Broadway* has there been a comedy so delicately devised and so intelligently played; and I cannot remember a film since *The Crowd*, by King Vidor, that so successfully and with so little artificiality strove to give us the plain honour of families and affections. But this is an exception among adaptations. Few of those who adapt plays or novels for the screen have the courage and imagination necessary to overcome the difficulties of their job: the majority choose the lazy way of simple representation, shelving the task of re-casting the material in a pure film form, and their work is ruled out of any serious appreciation of the cinema.

Considered from this point of view, the films of the quarter from Britain and America are not very imposing or important. New versions of *The Wandering Jew*, *Sorrell and Son*, and *The Constant Nymph* have been made in Britain, and *Turkey Time* and *Red Wagon* have been adapted. The last is the most interesting film made by British International since Hitchcock's *Murder*. Its story takes it out into the English country-side, which, if indifferently photographed, is better than an Elstree set, and the film, despite its inconsistencies, has a welcome sense of movement. The best British film of the quarter has been Victor Saville's *Friday the Thirteenth*, which, based on an original story, makes a real attempt to cut clear of movie commonplace. Its basic idea of turning the clock back on the lives of a number of people involved in a disaster has been used before by Thornton Wilder in "The Bridge of San Luis Rey"; but it is a good dramatic idea, and here the application—to a bus smash in London—is done with fluency and efficiency. A great film could not have been made of so facile a plot; but Saville has made an ingenious and entertaining one.

America's films of the quarter also indicate considerable dependence on the novelist and the playwright. *Berkeley Square* preserves the intelligent dialogue and interesting theme of an admirable play; *Service*, a little less skilfully, does the same for C. L. Anthony's work; and *Dinner at Eight*, another faithful play adaptation, gives M.G.M. an opportunity for a star display. *Ann Vickers*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, and *The Invisible Man* are variously representative of the novels used for films. With *Power and Glory*, however, an interesting experiment has been made with a form of narration new to cinema, in which the action is dependent on the memories of a man telling a story. Had the material of the film been more intelligent, the method might have attracted closer attention. As it is, we shall probably hear of "narratage" again.

Among the other American films of the quarter are *This Day and Age*, in which Cecil de Mille turns to modern times again and releases a dangerous incitement to anarchy in a story similar in some respects to *M*; and *Blonde Bombshell*, in which Hollywood, not content

with the self-exposure of *Once in a Lifetime*, continues with an almost malicious delight to laugh at itself. We have also seen *I'm No Angel*, to which Eric Knight refers in his article on "Synthetic America."

Outside of Britain and America, the most interesting developments have taken place in France, and the importance of *La Maternelle* and *Poil de Carotte* is discussed by Paul Rotha. Russia makes a single but significant contribution to the quarter with *Deserter*.

Several of the documentary films produced by the E.M.B. Film Unit have been issued during the quarter, and these will be considered, with the new films of Basil Wright and Arthur Elton, in a forthcoming article.

DESERTER

Production: Mejrabpomfilm. Direction: V. I. Pudovkin. Scenario: N. Agadjanova-Shutko, M. Krasnostavski, A. Lezebnikov. Photography: A. N. Golovnia. Art-Direction: A. Kozlovski. Music: I. Shaporin.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the London Film Society for importing this new Pudovkin film, for although it may not take us with fire, as did *Storm Over Asia* and *Mother*, it is nevertheless a sizeable attempt which demands serious concentration.

In *Deserter* Pudovkin attempts to cover a greater canvas than any director before him, selecting a theme more complex and wide-meaning than any yet tackled in the Soviet or other producing centre. I confess to being unable to describe the material in detail. In its giant stride the narrative embraces most of the vital social problems of a harassed world to-day—the struggle between the classes, unemployment and poverty, the tragedy brought about by economic crisis, the suffering of the working class, new hope in new leaderships, new ideals and new generations. There is tragedy, deep-down and stark. There is comedy, transient but catching. There is satire, penetrating and unanswerable. Whatever its faults, and it has many, its director was inspired, and that is a sign of greatness. By its very stature the picture is awe-inspiring. Only a Pudovkin could have attempted the task and only a Pudovkin could have fallen short of success by so small a margin of failure.

The central figure is a dock-worker in the Hamburg shipyards, involved in endless strikes and wage-disputes. He is chosen as a delegate to the Soviet Union, where he decides to remain and join in the work of the Five-Year Plan. But he realises that he is a deserter to his comrades in Germany and returns to take up the struggle on his native soil.

The relation of the German worker to the mass is maintained

by dialectic argument. Long and frequent passages of dialogue, treated in the crudest newsreel method, serve to put across the Marxist philosophy. To the audience with no knowledge of the Russian language these are naturally the dullerest moments, relieved only by the sudden crises of strike and conflict. The first part of the film is probably the best. Pudovkin has always excelled at setting the stage and the initial statement of his argument. You will recall *St. Petersburg* and *Storm Over Asia* in this connection. The sequences in the shipbuilding yards at Hamburg, the weakening of the strikers and the final breaking of the strike by blacklegs and machine-guns are the finest descriptive passages. Yet even in these I felt that Pudovkin failed to get below the surface of the incidents. His proletarian meetings did not secure my sympathy. There was no sense in the shouting mouths of workers. They behaved like bawling agitators and not like workmen fighting for an honest wage. By now, also, I had imagined that Pudovkin had realised the futility of exaggeration, but still there is the capitalist presented as a worthless, half-witted maniac, too lazy to speak, too tired to yawn. The libel is so grossly untrue, the effigy so patently childish, that the social purpose fails to score. Pudovkin cannot afford to lie, no matter what propaganda is served. It weakens his case and destroys our attention.

Technically, the film is as uneven as the presentation of its theme. Moments of inspired direction and brilliant cutting are alternated with long passages of mediocre cinematics which do not seem the work of the same man. Here and there flashes of technical skill stab us in the dark—falling chains, riveters at work, a riot with the police, a suicide in the street. But they are all too rare amid the monotonous treatment of the dialogue scenes. The sound is handled carefully and is based on a theory of conflicts. Unlike most opinions, I found some of it effective. Shaporin's music was well edited with actual sounds. At times it was used to create audience emotion in direct contradiction to the visual images. Gay music accompanies a suicide, busy traffic is cut to the rhythm of a waltz to express the lazy luxury of the capitalist world with the policeman at point-duty performing the dual tasks of conductor of traffic and music. But against all this we must bear with long, ugly silences and black-outs, disjointed and irritating.

Two years of toil have gone into the making of this strange mixture. With *A Simple Case* Pudovkin entered a side-track, seeking to impose formal method on theme. With *Deserter* he has penetrated further into the wilderness. But I cannot help but admire his courage and inspiration, his integrity and knowledge; and who are we to say whether he is right or wrong when the ground that he is treading is still unexplored?

PAUL ROTH.

LA MATERNELLE

Production: Photosonor. Direction: Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein. Photography: G. Asselin. Art Direction: Max Rossi. Music: Edouard Flament. With Madeline Renaud, Mady Berry, Paulette Flambert.

This surely is the child-picture to end child-pictures for the time being; and no better picture could be found to mark a semi-colon in this vogue for child actors. But let me say outright that this is in many ways an admirable film, most intelligently made, and played on all sides with a tenderness and sensibility that compel our respect. It is a story of Rose who, disappointed in love and deserted by her fiancé, takes work as a nursemaid in a children's school. Among the kids is Marie, whose mother is a tart, and thus the child is left much alone. She is known to the staff as being "difficult," in that her mentality is curiously complex. Her particular liking for animals plays an important part in events. When the old cook is about to throw a live mouse into the fire, it is Marie who struggles and bites to prevent the creature from being harmed. And as you expect, Marie's queer aloofness attracts to her the suppressed Rose. So the picture develops until the doctor, who is one of the superintendents of the school, declares his wish to marry Rose. Thus, once again, little Marie sees a man taking away her beloved one, just as she had seen her mother depart, and the child throws herself into the river. A rescue is effected, however.

Not particularly well-edited or photographed, the picture is notable for its brilliant treatment of the child mind, and the two directors are to be congratulated on their knowledge of child psychology. Throughout there are frequent incidents which reveal a deep understanding of children's mind-behaviour, from the little boy who cannot smile to the odd twisted attitude adopted by Marie when she is unhappy. The naturalness of the characterisation on the part of the adults and their attitude towards the children—one of the most difficult things to obtain on the screen—demands particular praise. Comedy is plentiful but is never forced. Sympathy is forthcoming for even the head-mistress because her moron mind is presented so naturally that her narrowness of outlook is to be pitied rather than condemned. Such sympathetic handling is all the more remarkable when we consider that no single player could be described as being physically likeable. Even little Marie, with her crooked teeth, sticking-out plaits and wan, thin face, is hardly attractive, and yet our sympathy is wholly with her. There are many emotionally disturbing moments; the final scene, when the doctor and Marie shake hands and become friends, being among the high spots of the year's cinema.

From Wyn Harris's 16 mm. record of the Everest Expedition, taken without previous experience on a Kodak camera. The film, which lasts for 75 minutes, has been publicly shown on a full screen at the London Polytechnic and should do much to popularise sub-standard production. Enquiries regarding the hire of this film should be sent to the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington, London, S.W.7.



Below
From Fritz Lang's "The Spy." One of the Ufa "classics" which is now available for home projection in the 9.5 mm. Pathescope Library.



**LONDON
FILMS**

PROUDLY PRESENT

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IN **"THE PRIVATE LIFE OF
HENRY VIII"**

Directed by
ALEXANDER KORDA

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The Film that will make Screen History

The production as a whole is unpretentious, singularly free from novelty technique and obviously inexpensive. In no other country but France would such a theme be considered movie, and yet it teaches every producer in Britain and America the value of psychology and treatment in movie-approach. Apart from its general appeal, which should be wide, it is a film which I would like shown to every school-teacher and worker in child-welfare organizations. They would find much to learn.

PAUL ROTH.

POIL DE CAROTTE

Production: Vandal and Delluc. Direction: Duvivier. Photography: Thiraud and Monniot. Montage: Marthe Poncin. With Robert Lynen, Felix Baur, etc.

THIS is a film which is particularly hard to assess. It has much which gives pleasure and much which is ridiculous; an odd mixture of the vices and virtues of cinema. If I recommend it, it is because Duvivier has something which the makers of other child films at the moment lack. If I abuse it, it is because there is so much nonsense about its character-drawing and because the case which it puts is surely unique and bears little relation to the wide problem of child-psychology. From the beginning we feel that this eccentric family cannot exist, that such conditions as those which drive young Poil de Carotte to attempt suicide are falsely conceived. Yet, despite this unbelief, Duvivier has created such a background with his trees and clouds and animals that portions of the film draw breath and for a fleeting moment exist. There are some great moments, moments which will remain in your mind, such as the wedding-march across the sun-splashed meadows and the crazy drive home in the gig. But return to the studio and Duvivier returns to his crude background, his stupid, spoilt children, his bearish father, his good-natured uncle, his overdrawn, overacted and exasperating mother—all figures from a fairy book. Not for one moment can we pretend that he deals seriously with the complexities of childhood or that he creates in Poil de Carotte a believable child.

It is the same from a technical aspect. Some sequences are delightfully handled, simple and direct; others are absurdly pretentious with trick effects and double-exposures. A great deal has been made of Robert Lynen's performance. Much as I admire his expressive capabilities and undoubted charm, you cannot compare his artificial playing with the naturalness of young Paulette Flam- bert in *La Maternelle*. The two men give skilled performances.

PAUL ROTH.

HUNTED PEOPLE (LE LOUP GAROU)

Direction: Friedrich Feher. Camera: Ewald Daub. Scenario: Feher and Fraenkel. Art Direction: E. Scharf. With Eugene Klöpfer, Hans Feher, Vladimir Sokolov, Magda Sonja, Camilla Spira, Friederich Ettel, Emilia Unda.

Little seems to be known of how this picture came to be made, when or where it was produced, or even who sponsored it. It opens with a fancy impression of Marseilles—the docks, the narrow streets, the steel bridge, the ministry of justice—and then by means of a viaduct along the coast takes us to the little village of Longville. Here a stout, middle-aged and prosperous joiner has just been married for the second time. He has risen in the world and has secured for his new wife the pretty daughter of the mayor. But while the nuptial festivities are at their height the local *gendarmerie* has identified the husband in a photograph of the bridal pair published in the Press as none other than an escaped convict. According to the law of France, the husband cannot be reimprisoned if he has eluded capture for ten years. Needless to say, the ten years are up all save for two days.

A *gendarme* presents himself at the house. Immediately the jolly joiner knows the game is up, but he decides to make a run for it. Accompanied by his small son, Boubou, he contrives to get away from the guarded house by hiding in a coffin (a good piece of cinema, this) while his wife and guests are making merry. He gets an illicit lift on a train, escapes in a tunnel and wanders about the streets of Marseilles. At every corner he hears a broadcast description of himself and his son. He secures a change of clothes for them both from a pawnbroker (admirably played by our old friend Vladimir Sokolov), sleeps with the down-and-outs in the docks, is disturbed by the fort sentries, makes a dash for the fair-ground, where the legless lady in a freak show turns out to be the sister of the woman he is supposed to have murdered and who really committed the crime herself.

In all this you will see ordinary melodrama without any distinction. But there are three things which lift the film above the conventional: the treatment, the acting, and the music.

In these days of "come up and see me" entertainment it is seldom we come across a film which is built up on an analysis of a single mood. For that we must go right back to the tradition of the early Germans—to *The Street*, *New Year's Eve*, *The Cab* and *Phantom*. The events in Feher's film are immaterial. There is one situation at the beginning; the rest is logical conclusion. The fast-moving sequences are simply a framework on which to hang a study of fear,

a grim paralysis of body and soul such as only the German movie can express with full grandeur.

The fat jolly joiner, who is suddenly seized with a paroxysm of fear that his carefully-built-up life will be shattered, is played by that stage-actor Eugene Klöpfer, whom you will recall in *The Street*, *New Year's Eve*, *Martin Luther* and *The Earl of Essex*. He has the true Germanic laboured style of heavy movements, which will remind you of Jannings. And it is his acting, drawn out by Feher's handling, that largely makes this picture interesting. His acting spreads beyond him, envelops the environment, bends the material to his will, just as Veidt in *The Student of Prague* or Wegener in *The Golem*. But it has this difference, that unlike the early German films it is played largely against an authentic background. The streets and alleys of Marseilles play as great a part in the building of the fear mood as the bogey man of Boubou's imagination. That is where Feher has been clever.

Although no credit is given for the music, it is obviously specially written for the film. Its phrasing is admirably in sympathy with the changes of mood. It swells to a climax, cuts sharp to silence, builds slowly again and so on. It is essentially an accompaniment emphasising the action, and I found it singularly successful.

PAUL ROTH.

MAYOR OF HELL

Production: Warner Brothers. Scenario: Chodorov. Direction: Archie Mayo. Photography: Barry McGill. Editing: Jack Kellifer. With James Cagney, Dudley Digges, Madge Evans, Frankie Darro.

WHAT IF this picture is inspired by *The Road to Life*? The inspiration is good and the idea behind the film admirable. It marks one of the biggest steps forward in the American movie's attempt to find themes in current social material. Do not confuse it casually with De Mille's *This Day and Age*. It is more important.

A gang of kid hooligans is broken up by the police and the ringleaders sent to a reform school, which is being run on a graft basis by a particularly villainous superintendent. A new deputy commissioner (Cagney) is appointed as a result of his assistance in a racket political election. The new commissioner has three virtues: an eye for women, a liking for "guts" and a sense of fairplay. The woman is the nurse at the school. He contrives to take over the running of the school, establishes a self-governing republic among the boys and all is well—perhaps with a little too much haste to be wholly convincing. But the racket behind him forces a shooting and he has to go under cover. The late superintendent again takes over, reinstates his old methods, leading eventually to a boy's death.

The boys revolt, try the superintendent in their court, where he commits suicide. Cagney arrives in time to quell the revolt, makes the boys see reason and continues his job as superintendent with the girl as his wife.

There is more to it than this. The wider issues of crime and education are brought up in a manner new, at any rate, to American cinema. Some exposure is made of the system obtaining in American reform schools, its obvious chance for graft management and a solution offered. You may not agree with much of the detail, but you cannot deny the exposure, and if you have any feelings at all towards the prevailing conditions of society you cannot fail to agree that here the cinema is on its right ground, facing realities as they must be faced. You may complain with me that the scenario does not go far enough, that it does not expose the roots of the social system which permits such education and upbringing, that we are not shown the boys' homes and environment which condition their outlook, that the film is, in fact, only a half-way house—but at the same time you will agree that its theme and treatment are a welcome change from ordinary Hollywood sin stories.

It has nothing new in technique. Cagney is excellent and conveys the impression that he is sincere in his behaviour. Dudley Digges overacts, but the mob-mentality demands it. It is one of the most stimulating American films I have seen for months.

PAUL ROTH.

WORTH NOTING

S.O.S. ICEBERG (*American. Universal*). The Arnold Fanck brigade of Alpine Endeavour has, I am sorry to say, suffered a landslide in Universal's new epic of the North. All the old stunts are paraded afresh: white snows and dark skies, aeroplane rescues and crashing ice, but this time the story fails even to attempt probability and frankly returns to the '05 melos. The picture was apparently conceived by the Fanck outfit in Germany, but was taken over by Universal when the original sponsors dropped out; consequently, the film comes out as conceived by little Laemmle Junior, and is prefaced by a personal tribute to the staff who gave their heroic efforts for the sake of Uncle Carl Laemmle and all. If you can stomach all this, there is some remarkable long-focus photography of icebergs and glaciers which is new to the screen from the cameras of Schneeberger and Angst, some very beautiful aerial shots secured by the dauntless Udet, and a nicely handled Esquimaux village sequence. And it all winds up with yet another "Laemmle special" ending, the superimposed figures marching onwards into the sky.

P. R.

THE WANDERING JEW (*British. Twickenham Film Studios*). This film has a magnificent opportunity to pattern the landscape of history. But theatrical conventions still tie the hands of British producers. "Costumes by Clarkson" in the credit titles typifies the director's attitude. In not one particular does the play emerge into movement. True to the tradition of costume pictures, sex is the motivation of every incident. The Jew wanders through history on a series of amorous exploits.

We once claimed that movie knocked a hole in the theatre wall. This picture demonstrates how we are replacing the walls of the theatre with the limits of the screen. Nothing ever happens outside the frame; we are ever conscious of the scenes brought to life by the producer's command to shoot.

This pageant of sex is graced by four of our leading stage actresses who belong to the British school "never forget you are a lady." But Conrad Veidt is the film, and the film is Conrad Veidt, and your enjoyment will depend on whether you can stand ten reels of Veidt undiluted, with no directional bridling. He runs the gamut of emotions without restraint. The chief virtues of this film have their source in Sidney Blythe, the cameraman, whose lighting and photography are consistently brilliant.

D. F. TAYLOR.

FOOTLIGHT PARADE (*American. Warner Brothers*). This is a triumph of showmanship. It belongs to a familiar type of screen revue, but the exploitation of spectacle has seldom produced a film in which the pictorial values are so outstanding. Its appeal is primarily to the eye. The musical trimmings are inferior to those of *Forty-Second Street*, hitherto regarded as the acme of the Warner achievement in revue. One sequence—for which Lloyd Bacon, the director, and George Barnes, the cameraman, take most of the credit—is probably the loveliest creation yet seen in films of this type. It owes much to the Goldwyn discovery, in *The Kid From Spain*, that choreographic patterns can be charmingly described in a swimming-pool by amphibious bathing beauties. It is, however, a finer achievement, and the evolutions of the tinselled bodies—now spreading outward like flower petals, now assembling in coils like a vast snake—testify to real feeling for the beauty of mass movement. The camera angles are well chosen. It was a happy thought to shoot part of the aquatic ballet from below the water. The result is magical. The film will have interest for admirers of James Cagney. He surprisingly reveals gifts as a singer and tap-dancer.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

FILM SOCIETIES

MORE NEW VENTURES

AFTER HOLDING a preliminary meeting in May last, the Croydon Film Society organised a further public meeting at the Croydon Picture House on 5th November, Anthony Asquith addressing the meeting. The result of these two meetings was very encouraging, and it was decided to proceed with arrangements for the first season. An application for permission to hold meetings on Sunday afternoons was accordingly made to the Croydon Council and, after a lengthy discussion, permission was refused. A subsequent application was successful, and a licence has now been granted, subject, however, to the following extraordinary terms:—(a) $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the Society's income to be devoted to charity; (b) all films to be submitted to a sub-committee of the Croydon Council; and (c) not more than two guest tickets to be allotted to any one member. The Hon. Secretary is G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street, Croydon.

AFTER ALL arrangements had been made to hold the performances of the third season of the Leeds Film Group on Sunday evenings at the Academy Cinema, the Magistrates reconsidered their decision and withdrew their licence. Formerly, performances of silent films had been given on week nights in a small private theatre.

Meanwhile an attempt is being made to form a society in Huddersfield, and if the sanction of the Watch Committee can be obtained, fortnightly performances will be given on Sunday evenings. Three hundred members are required to make possible a subscription of 10s. 6d. for six or eight shows.

ABERDEEN FILM Guild intends to start a series of Sunday performances when negotiations for a suitable cinema are completed. The Hon. Secretary is J. M. Mitchell, *Press and Journal* Office, Aberdeen.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. 5th Nov. *I Couldn't have Believed It* (Publicity Films). Zuts' Cartoon (Film Soc.). Pudovkin's *Deserter* (Film Soc.). 19th Nov. *Canal Barge* (Film Soc.). E.M.B. Shorts. *Anna and Elisabeth* (Film Soc.). 10th Dec. *Castles and Fisherfolk* (Publicity Films). *Architects' Congress* (Film Soc.). Fischinger's Hand Drawn Sound Experiment (Film Soc.). *A.B.C. in Sound* (Film Soc.). Extracts from Ruttman's *Acciaio* (Film Soc.). *L'Affaire est Dans le Sac* (Film Soc.).

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. S. G. Hawes, 163 Pershore Road, Birmingham. 22nd October. *Tour de Chant* (Film Soc.). *Shakespeare's Country* (Gaumont). *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* (Film Soc.). 12th November. *Zuyderzee Dyke* (Film Soc.). *King's English* (B.I.F.). *Coral and its Creatures*. *Le Rosier de Madame Husson* (Film Soc.). 10th Dec. E.M.B. Films. *The Schufftan Process* (Process Productions). Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.).

CHESHIRE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Diana Baerlein, Whatcroft Hall, Northwich. 19th Oct. *Zuyderzee Dyke* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Monkey Melodie* (Gaumont). *Barbarina* (Beacon). 9th Nov. *Marvels of the Amazon*. *En Natt*. (Film Soc.) 7th December. *Charleston* (Film Soc.). *Mickey in Arabia* (Gaumont). *Tabu* (Paramount).

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. G. R. Bailey, 51 High Street, Croydon. 3rd Dec. *Turbulent Timber* (G.B. Distributors). *Lichtertanz* (Filmophone). *Blue-bottles* (Film Soc.). *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* (Film Soc.).

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 S. St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh, 2. 29th Oct. *Black Diamonds* (Wardour). Excerpt from *Love on Wheels* (Gaumont). *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* (Film Soc.). 19th Nov. *Cinemagazine*, *Is Gretna Green* (Gaumont). *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *The Country Comes to Town* (Gaumont). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 10th Dec. *Power* (Zenifilms). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). *Le Quatorze Juillet* (Film Soc.).

On 16th Oct. Victor Saville lectured to the Guild, accompanied by Madeleine Carroll, and on 9th Dec. an address was given by Miss Lockett, of G.-B. Instructional Films, following which there was an exhibition of Gaumont 16mm. films.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec. D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2. 5th Nov. *King's English* (B.I.F.). *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Le Quatorze Juillet* (Film Soc.). 29th Nov. *Flight Machine* (B.I.F.). *Prague* (Film Soc.). *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.). 10th Dec. *The Blue Angel* (Wardour). *Sous les Toits de Paris* (Wardour).

On 10th Dec. John Grierson addressed the Society on his work as a documentary director.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY, Vaughan College, Leicester. 21st Oct. *Cambridge* (B.I.F.). *A Bronx Morning* (Film Soc.). *Brumes D'Automne* (Film Soc.). *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* (Film Soc.). 18th Nov. *Springtime at the Zoo* (B.I.F.). Disney's *Fox Hunt* (Gaumont). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.).

MAIDSTONE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Miss G. M. Nicholson, Fowden Hall, London Road, Maidstone. This new society holds its performances on Sunday evenings at the Palace Theatre. The subscription is 10s. 6d. The first performance included *The Blue Light* (Universal). 17th Dec. *En Natt* (A.P.&D.). *New Generation* (New Era).

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 86 Hulton Street, Salford. 21st Oct. *Lichtertanz* (Filmophone). *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *King's Parade* (Arcos). *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. 18th Nov. *Peasant Women of Riazan*. *World Melody*. 16th Dec. *The Battle of Life*. *Joan of Arc*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, 44 Ullet Road, Liverpool, 17. 20th Oct. *Don Quixote* (U. Artists). *Contact* (Wardour). 25th Nov. *The Road to Life* (Arcos). On 30th Nov. a lecture was given by Paul Rotha. During January there is to be an exhibition of stills and a demonstration of sub-standard apparatus.

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. W. Baldwin Fletcher, I.C.I. (Alkali) Ltd., Winnington, Northwich. This new society holds its performances on week-day evenings in the Recreation Park Pavilion. It has no subscription, other than an admission charge to each performance. 27th Sept. *The Invasion of Shanghai* (Film Soc.). Mickey Mouse. *Pitz Palu* (Universal). 26th Oct. *Contact* (Wardour). *This is Paris that Was*. Mickey Mouse. *Kameradschaft* (Nat. Distributors). 29th Nov. *Gold of the North* (Gaumont). *Lichtertanz* (Filmophone). *Le Million* (Universal).

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Mrs. Hilda Harrisson, Sandlands, Boars Hill, Oxford. This society is now properly established and plans to give eight performances in the Scala Cinema. The subscription is 10s. 5th Nov. *Bluebottles* (Film Soc.). Mickey Mouse. *Turbulent Timber* (G.B. Distributors). *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* (Film Soc.). 3rd Dec. *The Danube*. Disney's *Flowers and Trees* (United Artists). *Westfront 1918* (Film Soc.). 29th Nov. *The Front Page* (United Artists). *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Film Soc.). 17th Dec. *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Trader Mickey* (Gaumont). *Bathtime at the Zoo* (B.I.F.). *The Ghost that Never Returns* (Arcos).

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. 15th Oct. *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Skeleton Dance* (Gaumont). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.). 29th Oct. *Tour de Chant* (Film Soc.). Chaplin's *Floorwalker* (Radio). *Pred Maturitou* (Film Soc.). 26th Nov. *Canal Barge* (Film Soc.). *October 15*. Disney's *Babes in the Wood* (United Artists). *Potemkin* (Arcos). 12th Nov. *Symphony of the Sea* (B.I.F.). Moholy Nagy's *Lichtspiel* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Bears and Bees* (United Artists). *Zoo in Budapest* (Fox).

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. General Sec., J. S. Fairfax-Jones. Southampton: A. Tomlinson, D. A. Yeaman, 21 Ethelbert Avenue, Bassett Green. Winchester: Ruth Keyser, C. J. Blackbourne, 12 St. Swithan Street. All performances are now held on Sunday afternoon, and a branch establishment has been formed at Winchester. The society has a group for lectures and discussions, and a course of lectures at University College is in course of negotiation. 12th Nov. *Turbulent Timber* (G.B. Distributors). *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Prague* (Film Soc.). *A Nous La Liberté* (Universal). 3rd Dec. *Magic Myxies* (B.I.F.). *Fischinger Abstract* (Filmophone). *Steel* (G.B. Distributors). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.).

WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec., A. L. Watson, 9 First Avenue, Plaistow. This new society has a clubroom and library, and is making a trailer to advertise its activities on the local screens. Work will shortly commence on a silhouette film based on a classic poem. Early in January there will be given a performance of revived silent films. The subscription is 6s. a quarter.

THE LONDON University Film Society held a number of performances of silent films earlier in the year in the theatre at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Its activities are now temporarily suspended pending the installation of sound apparatus at that theatre.

IFMA INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS ASSOCIATION

Write to

The Hon. Secretary, G. A. SHAW
32 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1

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A FEW months ago the Independent Film-Makers Association was started. As with most new schemes at their inception, there were doubts about it. Were there enough amateurs wanting specialised information about definite aspects of their work who were not catered for by the local societies and groups? Were there even people taking their work seriously enough to want professional advice?

There were. People have wanted all sorts of advice. Some setting out on their first movie Odyssey have written for information about equipment. For contacts with other workers. For criticism of their films. They have written to argue the finer points of Pudovkin on Sound, or to find out the right filters to take to the West Indies.

In fact, a host of keen people want to make films and want to make those films as well as possible. To these our advisers have given the best of their professional experience; experience that means something; the experience of people who are making films.

The scheme is started—that, for the moment, is enough.

STUART LEGG's article in this issue is important, very important. Read it—learn it by heart even—but above all put it into practice. The clearer the treatment the better chance the finished film has of being a comprehensive whole.

THE FIRST issue of the Ifma Bulletin will appear very shortly. It will contain details of a Summer School, Scenario Service and Film Exchange plans.

INVITATION TO INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS

AT THE International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art, which is to be held at Venice, in August, under the auspices of the *XIX Biennale d'Arte*, there will be presented a representative selection of the best films of all nations. In addition to the usual commercial productions, the organisers are anxious to include films by independent and vanguard producers, to whom an invitation to co-operate has been issued by Attilio Fontana, Exhibition Secretary, I.I.E.C., Via Lazzaro Spallanzani 1a, Rome. Before submitting films, which must be of recent production and "of the highest artistic value," a full description and a selection of stills should be sent to Rome.

INCLUDED in the new Gaumont-British Equipments 16 mm. sound-on-film library are *Sunshine Susie*, *Jack's the Boy*, *Love on Wheels* and *Rome Express*. A number of *Ideal Cinemagazines* and *Gainsborough Miniatures* are also available. All films are non-flam and may be hired for 5s. per reel per day.

IN CONJUNCTION with the Manchester Ramblers' Federation the Manchester Film Society is producing a film called *Manchester at Work and Play*. It also intends to make an abstract entitled *Heads* from a scenario by G. F. Dalton.

ONE OF the original members of the Cambridge University Cinema Society, who has made a serious study of film technique, has started a new service for the benefit of those who have ideas for film scenarios but lack the experience or the time for putting them into shape. His agency is known as the Regent Literary Service.

CHARLES HAMNER, the former miner and producer of *Black Diamonds*, is planning to start a studio at Barnsley for the production of films for children. These will be mainly fairy stories and pantomimes and will be acted by children.

A LONDON group of the Independent Film-makers Association will shortly be formed, and an attempt is being made to form a similar group in Glasgow. Enquiries, in the first instance, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, I.F.M.A.

THE METEOR Film Producing Society, Glasgow, is one of the most energetic groups in the country. It has a well-equipped studio, and arranges lectures and exhibitions. At the Scottish Film Festival, which it recently organised, Victor Saville awarded first prize to one of the Society's own films, *All on a Summer's Day*. It hopes soon to make a number of short documentaries on 35 mm. The Hon. Secretary is Stanley L. Russell, 14 Kelvin Drive, Glasgow, N.W.

THE FILM ON PAPER

PLANNING THE PRODUCTION

STUART LEGG

Director of "The New Generation"

IN ANY production some sort of preliminary planning, however vague and inexact, is necessary. Otherwise a "few-shots-strung-together" interest picture of the type we pray to be delivered from is the inevitable result. The three stages of making a film—scenario, shooting, cutting—are each a selective process; so that the earlier a selective attitude is adopted, the greater will be the co-ordination of thought all through the making of the film. And, perhaps more important still, selection at the first (scenario) stage will lead straight-way to the saving of time and *money*.

Pre-shooting paper work is a progressive choosing of "aspects." In choosing an aspect of general existence, you choose your subject. In choosing an aspect of that subject, you choose your *theme*. The theme is that particular aspect of the subject, and latent in it, which you are going to bring to the fore in your film. Its choice depends largely upon your personal feelings towards the subject. You may foster a purely scientific feeling for it; you may be concerned with the politics involved; you may be interested in a sociological aspect of it. But whatever your reaction to the subject, it is essential to choose a definite theme from it, for the theme is the *raison d'être* of the film. The theme is not necessarily a movie conception in itself; it appears in visual terms in the next stage of preparation—the treatment. But it must be a single, precise entity, and all other themes and bits of themes must be shelved. By sticking to one theme and one theme only, clarity of construction is ensured.

Next comes the problem of how to handle the real-life material from which the film is going to be made. This is solved in the process of writing the treatment. With the theme already chosen, the method of treatment is, to a certain extent, determined. If your theme is scientific, you will be most concerned with some concrete product of the subject, ways and means of obtaining it, and its place in the general economic scale. If political, you will be occupied with the attitude of the people of the subject towards each other and towards their work. If sociological, you will be interested in bringing alive the people themselves and their actual relationships to each other and to the subject. And so on. So you will tend to construct

your film expositionally, symphonically, lyrically, or by any other method, according to the aspect of the subject you have chosen for the theme. These methods are by no means mutually exclusive; each is used where and when it is wanted, according to the requirements of the theme. The writing of the treatment is another selective process. The main work in it is the seeking out of those visual aspects of the available material which best express the theme. You will probably concern yourself first with the "chunks" of the material which will go to form the sequences of the film. There may be many such chunks available for shooting. But which of them are relevant to, and best bear out the theme? Which of them readily lend themselves to movie construction? Then, when the chunks are selected, in what order are they to be used, to give the best form to the finished film? These considerations must be carefully weighed, and the chunks selected and ordered into the sequences of the film. Next, you will take each chunk separately and analyse what goes on inside them. These analyses, when built up into visual terms, will form the shots and combinations of shots within each sequence. In determining how to treat the material in each chunk, don't merely look to surface appearances, or you will get a smooth, easy, meatless tale. Surface exposition and surface drama may be well and useful in its place, but it is not the business of films to record the obvious. Look behind the surface for drama more closely allied to the essence of the chunk you are interpreting; the use of latent dramatic references brings more power to the film because of their closer intimacy to the material. Take, for instance, a telephone exchange; there is drama, obvious drama, in the fact that the exchange is the hub of the city's communications. But go closer, and you will hear the separate voices of the city, each deep in its own affairs, each telling a story of its own. And from these isolated stories you can cross-section the life of the city, the drama of commerce, of industry, of homes. Perhaps the best way of going about this analysis is to catalogue systematically all relevant observations, and to start lines of co-ordinative thought from spontaneous details of people and things. These details often give valuable clues to the best way of treating each chunk of material.

Direct observation leads to the consideration of two elements in any given happening or event: *what* and *who*. First, consider the *what*. Look not only for what is happening, but also for the attendant circumstances of the event, which will orientate it and stamp it as that particular event and no other. For example, a big business man dictating in his office: perhaps the attendant circumstances which best stamp the scene as "big business" are the beflagged map on the wall behind the man, and the imperious buzzer on his desk.

Look further for the pace of what is happening, for pace is the factor leading to drama. The slow, measured, to-and-fro walk of the business man as he dictates is an essential element in his scene. Second, consider the *who*. Look not only for who is concerned in the happening, but for the attendant circumstances of the *who*, which will orientate and stamp the person in relation to the event. For instance, in *Voice of the World* Elton showed the turning on of power in the power-house to bring electricity to the factory. The electrician by whom this was done had only one eye. So Elton told us something more about that man than that he was merely an electrician. Look then for the significance of the person in regard to the event, how he or she is bound up with it. In the same sequence of *Voice of the World* the steady, confident arm movement of the electrician related him instantly to the machinery of which he had charge. Then, the combination of these two elements of a given event, the what and the who, the welding of them together into a whole, will bring co-ordination to the event and will lead to poetry, imagery, ceremony—that is, it will give a spiritual reference to an ordinary happening.

Having analysed the material available for shooting, and extracted from it all those aspects which have bearing on the proposed interpretation, it is now necessary to build up *visually* all these parts into their place in the treatment. Literary conceptions and literary embellishments must be conspicuous by their absence. This is not a didactic convention: it is a practical necessity. Literary ideas invariably make bad movie, and in many cases are utterly impossible to shoot. Every descriptive word of a good treatment adds a visual component to the whole. At this stage, questions of proportion in dealing with the material must be settled. Which of the previously selected chunks are most important in relation to the theme? These are the ones to receive more exhaustive attention, greater elaboration, and possibly greater length. Others, less meaty, must take second place. Others again, though visually pleasant, may have to be excluded altogether, since they do not sufficiently assist the theme. The position of *tempo* changes must also be determined; that is, the points where dramatisation of material will begin. Points where one form of construction will emerge from another must be considered; what sections will be purely explanative, what sections will be shot in such a way as to allow the material and its inferences to dominate over the general theme. Points for special emphasis in shooting or cutting must be fixed. So, with the theme selected from the subject, the treatment from the theme, and the methods of interpretation from the relevant aspects of the material itself, the shooting-script—the blue-print shot-by-shot plan of the film—can be written.

In the shooting-script you will begin to consider how the photo-

graphic apparatus at your disposal can help you to shape the material before you, how it can explain, elaborate, emphasize and strengthen—in fact, how the camera and its accessories can turn actual fact into movie shape. But don't be too confident of the finished shooting-script. Very few can resist the temptation of hacking it about during the shooting to include some new development which suddenly presents itself. And a new spontaneity may often be gained by doing this. As long as the main lines of the treatment are rigidly adhered to, and irrelevant prettinesses religiously eschewed—the shooting-script can be respectfully forgotten.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY CINEMA SOCIETY

AN attempt to break away not only from sub-standard stock but also from the type of story which, we readily admit, can be more easily and more efficiently turned out by the trade, has been made by the Cambridge University Cinema Society in its recent production *Power*, which is being distributed by Zenifilms.

Although many people have much spare time at Cambridge, the spare time of different people does not often coincide; and therefore it is difficult to get a large unit together for any length of time. Documentary is the ideal material for a university film society. Contrary to popular belief, there are many young men in Cambridge who will work like niggers, at work both manual and secretarial. There are also the young men with ideas, so often heard of; and these ideas are given coherent form by means of lectures and practical film work. As for material, Cambridge can provide anything from the most modern laboratories to the most ancient buildings and a beautiful country-side.

The subject of *Power* presents great possibilities. Had time allowed, it would have been made a two-reeler. It is actually a one-reeler; but the subject has not been skimped, and the film flows easily from the first efforts of man to harness the winds and the waters, to the most modern developments of steam and electrical power.

The film was directed by Gordon Taylor. It was written by him in conjunction with Maurice Harvey, who is now directing *Pygmalion* for the society, which he also wrote.

Also under production at present is a film of the building of the vast new library at Cambridge, for which half the cost, £500,000, was given by the Rockefeller Trust. The director is Roger Colville-Wallis; on the camera are P. L. Mollison and C. D. Pegge, (the author of *Bombay Riots*).

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Our next film is already in production. **LONDON FILM PRODUCTIONS** will present shortly **Mr. Douglas Fairbanks** in '**THE PRIVATE LIFE OF DON JUAN.**' The story is written by **Lajos Biro**; the dialogue and the filmplay by

Frederick Lonsdale, the outstanding genius of the English theatre. This film will not only recreate all the glamour of Spain's most romantic figure but is a witty commentary of this much discussed sex-appeal and an exposé of the world's greatest lover which will delight you and your wife too! **Mr. Fairbanks** in a greater role than that of 'The Thief of Bagdad' or 'Robin Hood.'

One of our production units has just returned, after an arduous five months, from the jungles of Africa. They visited little known places in the Congo, Tanganyika and Uganda. They brought back with them hundreds of thousands of feet of sound and film showing the life of the country. We shall use this film to make the greatest romance of Empire building which will be woven round the world famous character by the late **Edgar Wallace**, **COMMISSIONER SANDERS OF THE RIVER**. Over twenty thousand natives are used in these scenes one of which shows the war between the Acharis and the Akasavi tribes. The film story is by **Lajos Biro** and **Arthur Wimperis** with dialogue by **Jeffrey Dell**, author of 'Payment Deferred.' It is directed by **Zoltan Korda**.

We are preparing two films for the outstanding genius of the English stage and of the world screen—**Charles Laughton**. One of these two films will be written by **Frederick Lonsdale**. The other by **Lajos Biro** and **Arthur Wimperis**, the two writers who created for him 'HENRY VIII.'

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Look again at this list of writers: **H. G. WELLS, FREDERICK LONSDALE, ROBERT SHERWOOD, BARONESS ORCZY, EDGAR WALLACE, LAJOS BIRO, ARTHUR WIMPERIS,** and **JEFFREY DELL.**

Look at the list of our players: **Mr. DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, CHARLES LAUGHTON, DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, Jr., MAURICE CHEVALIER, GEORGE GROSSMITH, CEDRIC HARDWICK, ROBERT DONAT, ELIZABETH BERGNER, MERLE OBERON, BENITA HUME, ELSA LANCHESTER, FLORA ROBSON, LADY TREE, BINNIE BARNES, JOAN GARDNER, WENDY BARRIE** and **DIANA NAPIER.**

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CLEAR THE DECKS!

FOR THE greater part of its history the cinema has been attacked, neglected, or unfeignedly despised. The claims of the pioneers who discerned the potentialities of the film as a medium of expression were openly scoffed at; at best they were tolerated with superior condescension. But to-day, after years of patient propaganda, they are backed by a growing body of public opinion. We are now able to talk about "intelligent filmgoers," and to address them, knowing that they exist in even greater numbers than is generally realised.

According to C. A. Lejeune, unusually optimistic, these wise folk can succeed in raising the standard of production by demanding from exhibitors a better type of film and by staying away from films they don't want to see. A pious hope! Until popular education and the general level of civilisation is improved a hundredfold there will always be sufficient people willing to spend their ninepence (or their eight-and-six) on films that are no better than the present measure of specious entertainment. Intelligent filmgoers, numerous as they are, could have little effect on the box-office if they all decided never to enter a picture-house again. The trouble at present is that too many people of the type who might be expected to appreciate good films stay away from the cinema altogether. St. John Ervine, it would appear, is more persuasive than Miss Lejeune.

But if discerning patrons cannot prevent bad or indifferent films from being made, they can encourage and support the production of films with higher ideals and with a greater sense of artistic integrity than the average cinema audience is accustomed to. This patronage of worth-while films can make all the difference between financial failure and modest but adequate success. Only by the prospect of their paying their way can even the most idealistic producers be encouraged to make such films, and only by the public exhibition of these films can it be hoped to raise the general level of appreciation, and so ultimately of production.

But to effect any influence on production, and to exert the strength of its numbers, this patronage must be organised. An intensive campaign must be waged against the attitude of the commercial cinema which prefers to ignore intelligence rather than to cater for it. Before the call to action goes forth, however, it must be seen that the decks are clear and that the course set is the right one.

THE FILM INSTITUTE

The establishment of the British Film Institute adds a new and much-needed power to the campaign for the development of intelligent cinema. The Institute has many tasks to perform—the dissemination of information and advice, research into the development and use of the film, the formation of a national repository of films, the linking of trade and “cultural and educational interests,” and the influencing of public opinion—and in order to perform these tasks thoroughly it asks for, and most definitely requires, the co-operation of specialist bodies already engaged in the various fields of cinema, educational, social, and cultural activity.

In spite of an unsatisfactory constitution which places control in the hands of a governing body on which there is no public representation, the Institute is capable of accomplishing an immense amount of good. In so far as it can achieve results, opposition to its efforts on the part of other organisations would be futile and nig-gardly. But as a national organisation, approved by the Government and spending public funds, the Institute must expect—and receive—criticism as well as help. It exists not for the convenience of its members, but for the benefit of the public—an important consideration which receives emphasis by the publication of “The Cinema and the Public,” in which Walter Ashley presents “a critical analysis of the origin, constitution and control of the ‘British Film Institute.’”

THE ASHLEY ATTACK

Ashley’s criticism takes the form of a letter to the President of the Privy Council, whom he wished to influence against recognising the Institute’s claim for a grant from the Cinematograph Fund. With a mass of carefully documented evidence it seeks to prove that the Institute is largely under the control of the film trade, and that it is powerless to exert any effective influence over the mass of entertainment films. In his zeal to prove his case, however, Ashley has interpreted certain events to suit his argument. There is no evidence, for instance, that “Scotland is wisely preparing to cut itself off” from the operations of the B.F.I.—the actual position being, that provided Scotland can retain its independence to deal with its own problems (which are substantially different from those of England) it is both willing and anxious to co-operate with the Institute.

The main object in Ashley’s “exposure” was frustrated by the fact that publication was delayed until too late to have any effect on the allocation of the Privy Council grant. What will be its influence on public opinion depends on the importance readers place on the facts removed from their opinionative context.

THE FILM SOCIETIES

In an introduction to a recently published book entitled "For Filmgoers Only," R. S. Lambert, one of the Governors of the British Film Institute, suggests that the film society movement, "which draws its strength from a certain despair," may be in danger of developing "a 'coterie' sense expressing itself in an excessive admiration for one particular kind of film, as, for instance, a few years ago, the Russian film." This is both misleading and ungenerous, as well as impolitic on the part of one representing a body requiring all the organised support it can get. Does Mr. Lambert's interest in cinema not go far enough back for him to remember that it was the Russian film more than anything else which first aroused general interest in the new art of the film? In any case, the spread of the film society movement did not come until the first wave of enthusiasm for the Russian film had passed, and I challenge Mr. Lambert to discover in the programmes of the film societies published in *Cinema Quarterly* any evidence of coterie tendencies.

Instead of belittling the achievement of the film societies, many of whom have been doing for years work which the Institute is only now attempting, it might have been expected that some form of co-operation would have been sought. True, societies have been invited to become "branches" of the Institute—at the cost of forfeiting their independence and working under conditions of financial and administrative control which would preclude their proper functioning. Meanwhile, though cinema as a whole would benefit from the establishment of an efficient central organisation and a reliable information bureau, the Institute is proceeding to form branches up and down the country. This it is perfectly justified in doing, and some of its branches are already doing excellent work in areas where no organisation was already in existence. But it is an exaggeration to claim that they are accomplishing more than the principal film societies are doing in their own sphere.

The independent film societies, unhampered by any restrictive constitution or the limits of orthodoxy, must continue their separate existence as the advance-guard of the cinema—though of course this does not imply opposition to the Institute, whose aims and projects most societies, if asked, would be pleased to assist wherever possible. When new bodies come to be formed in districts as yet unorganised they will have to consider whether their ideals can best be served by remaining independent or under the ægis of centralised control.

NORMAN WILSON.

A POET LOOKS AT THE CINEMA

POETRY AND FILM

HUGH MacDIARMID

SOME OF the remarks made in the editorials in the last issue of *Cinema Quarterly*, under the captions "Literature and the Film" and "Words and Music," give me a convenient jumping-off place for this short article—particularly these sentences: "For some time the virtue of the spoken word has been in doubt. The hundred-per-cent. talkie is no more, and even Hollywood is beginning to use words selectively and even impressionistically, instead of in the name of realism," and "the music [for films] must be specially composed." Poetry is a much more complex and concentrated form of expression than prose—the characteristic of all great poetry is an economy in presenting experience which keeps us wondering that so much can be said in so few words. It may be defined as the art of maximum statement in minimum space. The consequence of this is its unrivalled quality of memorableness—and the desirability, even the need, of associating this quality with the cinema by every possible means needs no stressing. But the difference between poetry and mere verse (which are so generally confused) is that the latter simply decorates the unelucidated fact with fancy while the former is endowed with the imagination which penetrates to the reality in the fact. Realism, in the sense used in the sentence quoted above, is mere actualism—the acceptance of the fact; the cinema has not gone far beyond that yet and then only in superadding fancy; the future of the cinema depends on its power to use imagination. I say the future of the cinema advisedly, instead of merely its artistic future; its commercial future also depends upon that in the last resort. The hundred-per-cent. use of the spoken word (and a very great deal less than a hundred per cent.) in conjunction with actualist photography is a false convention; the two things are discordant from the beginning—because people do not talk that way, or not much, and when they do they are not being true to themselves but obeying a convention. Instead of consisting of grammatical sentences and a logical progression, people's intercourse is a thing of verbal fragments and expressive sounds, needing no continuity of utterance because it is supplemented by all manner of gestures, looks, understandings, and what not. The importance of this from the cinema standpoint is that the cinema already has all that essential supplemental substance of

expression as printed literature has not; to follow the latter, therefore, in using the unlikelike verbal continuity which the disabilities of the latter necessitate is trebly disadvantageous, because it is at once unlikelike, unnecessary, and repetitive in an inferior medium to what the film itself is expressing. It is also unmodern—in other words, anachronistic to the art of the cinema—since much of the experimentation in modern literature has been due to a realisation of this disability and to efforts to cut out the dead wood of expression. In so far as the cinema has associated itself with verbal expression it has been with forms of it not contemporaneous with itself. There is another point: by eschewing words altogether the cinema would remain unlikelike in another way by having the gestures, looks, and so on dissociated from the words and sounds which actually accompany them, and upon which, in real life, they are as dependent as the disjointed words and sounds are upon them. In this common plight of literature and the cinema, then, it seems to me that they are indispensable to each other, and in the long run this may be discerned as the main (if not the only) significance of the emergence of the cinema at this juncture in the history of human expression and communication. The relation, or possible relation, of literature to the cinema is seen to be, from this standpoint, precisely the opposite of that of broadcasting to literature.

As if it had anticipated the advantages of the cinema accruing to it, literature, as I have said, has long been experimenting intensively along the lines necessary to enable it to seize that great opportunity. Much modernist literature from Tolstoy onwards depends upon a realisation of the revelation of personalities less in speech than in sound (a fact which provides an adequate commentary on the efforts of the B.B.C. to standardise pronunciation!) and recent Russian literature, for example, has concentrated to a great extent on the exploitation of *skaz* (or inter-sense) and *zaumny* (or local and personal intonations of all kinds). The general preoccupation with the “stream of consciousness”—with, not the banal conventionalities people utter, most of which they use less to express themselves than to disguise what they are really thinking, but with what lies behind these—is another great pointer in the same direction. It is absurd that a magnificent instrument like the cinema should be content, in the period of tremendous advances in psychological knowledge with which it synchronises, and to which the modern literature in question is so intimately related, to depend on stock stage and penny novelette conceptions of human nature of the most otiose kind. A great deal of work in modernist poetry consists in the exploitation of pure sound, and, alike from the psychological and purely æsthetic sides, it is with the poets that the verbal future of the cinema lies, since prose remains the language of logical discourse and most of its

context is redundant to the film, whereas poetry has not only maximum economy, supreme revelatory power, and capacities, equal to its unrivalled power of penetrating reality, for soaring away from it altogether but of associating itself with music. I agree with Hitchcock that the music must be specially composed; so must the poetry. It will be the cheapest possible addition to film-making, probably. Most poets would jump at the opportunity for next to nothing.

Probably no contemporary writer has had a more widespread and profound influence, both as a poet and a critic, on his contemporaries than T. S. Eliot, and it is interesting to find him saying, in his latest book:

“After admitting the possible existence of minor ‘difficult’ poets whose public must always be small, I believe that the poet naturally prefers to write for as large and miscellaneous an audience as possible, and that it is the half-educated and ill-educated, rather than the uneducated, who stand in his way: I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write. The most useful poetry, socially, would be one which could cut across all the present stratifications of public taste—stratifications which are perhaps a sign of social disintegration.”

He draws attention in a footnote to some helpful remarks on the subject of “education” from this angle in D. H. Lawrence’s “Fantasia of the Unconscious,” and it is undoubtedly along the lines of overcoming this barrier and bringing the artist into direct contact with the vast public without the interposition of a parasitical and misleading “interpreting class” that the cinema can render a stupendous social, cultural, and creative service. Eliot is supposed to be a highbrow of the highbrows. He is. But I am certain that much of his work would be immensely popular if it could be put over directly to the big public. My own work has similarly been criticised as extremely difficult and limited in its appeal. But whenever I have had an opportunity of reading any of it to a general audience I have found it popular, and my “synthetic Scots” at its most synthetic “goes over” all right, because it is pure onomatopœia—a universal speech; Scots in quality. Another case in point is James Joyce, who has similarly been condemned as hopelessly highbrow and quite unreadable. Those who have heard the gramophone record of his reading of “Anna Livia Plurabelle” know how absurd these charges are. It becomes at once intelligible to everybody and a most enchanting experience. How magnificently it would go with a film! Incidentally, it may be pointed out that Joyce’s multi-linguistic medium is definitely along the right lines; that extraordinary amalgam in which elements of over fifteen languages have already been “spotted” becomes simultaneously—*when spoken*, not read—a universal speech, and all the more intensely Irish.

It is easy to see that while these elements in modernist literature are along lines appropriate to cinema use, there are other elements which the cinema must progressively eschew. This is what led H. A. Potamkin, discussing "Pabst and the Social Film," to say the film-producer "no longer dallies with 'the woman who has been abundantly charged with sex-consciousness'; she is only a figure of speech. *Pandora's Box* is inconclusive, not because 'one should not make films of literature'—that is a sophistry—nor unsatisfying because Wedekind cannot be cinematised. It is inconclusive and unsatisfying because the literary source is a network of negotiations, and not the experience of people; and the film, in consequence, figures of speech stalking as men and women." But Potamkin went on to show what can be done when he said of *Kameradschaft*:

"Sound has allowed Pabst an aid in the double-speech, French and German, very specific values, and a lingering quality—e.g. 'Georges!' called by the old man—that sensitises the appeal of pathos. The French girl who has refused a dance to the German the night before, beholding the rescuing-party, murmurs: '*Les Allemands! C'est pas possible!*' Here is a speech within the theme, speech that is correlative to the play of the people at the mine-gate. The inflection is contained within a subdued range, allowed to break through at strategic points. Its essence is documentary, its contact revelatory, and along the line of its construction Pabst might have extended his message to its fullness, thereby forestalling the criticism that the film lacks warmth. But for this extension was needed the consummation of Pabst's own ethical tendency."

Precisely! That is, in other words, the problem of artistic integrity, and the whole question of the cinema realising its vast potentialities depends upon that. My purpose here has been to stress only a few special points in relation to it, and the words "correlative," "strategic points," and "revelatory" in the above quotation bring me back to the fact that the poetry must be specially composed—and that the poetry, the music, and the film must be complementary to each other, and neither repetitive of, and therefore redundant to, each other, nor discrete in the way that cinema music, and, in a different field, the settings of many songs are being applied to purposes for which they were never intended, and receiving a slack conventional acceptance from the confused receptivity of the audience. It may be worth mentioning in closing that a little reflection on the part of those most vitally concerned with the artistic integrity and popular appeal of the cinema upon the history of human culture generally, and the theatre in particular, will show that popular entertainments always reached the highest levels of artistic integrity and simultaneously had the greatest hold on the public when they were most closely associated with poetry.

THE COMMUNALISTIC ART OF WALT DISNEY

MACK W. SCHWAB

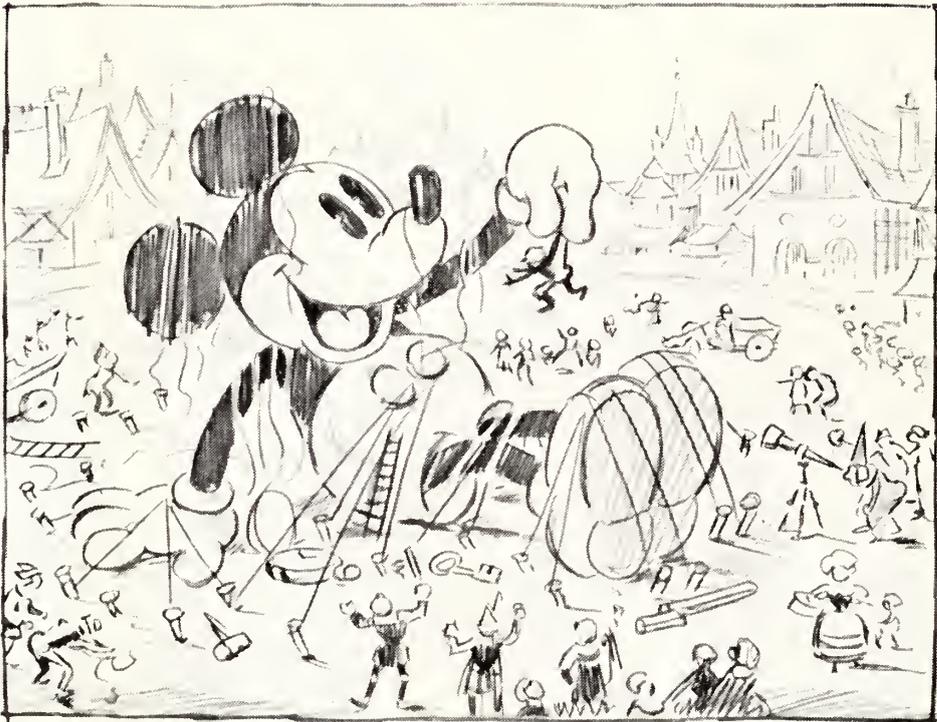
WALT DISNEY has been praised for a variety of contributions to creative cinema, but one of the most interesting aspects of Disney and his creations has been almost completely ignored and neglected. And that is the uniquely communalistic method Disney has developed for the creation and production of his cartoons since the birth of Mickey Mouse five years ago. A hundred or more creative workers are responsible in some degree for each cartoon, and yet the result always typifies the genius of one artist, Walt Disney. It is doubtful whether (even in Soviet Russia, where group effort is paramount) there is any form of artistic activity comparable to that in the Disney studio, in which such heterogeneity of effort achieves so successfully homogeneity in its accomplishment.

In describing the manner in which the cartoons are developed, there is a danger of over-formalising a casual method of work. Compared to the routine and departmental order in the major studios, the atmosphere of the Disney studio is Arcadian in its informality. Ideally planned for the fantastic creative activity essential to cartoon production, the Disney studio allows its artists complete freedom to be as creative in as many different ways as they are capable. As specific credit is absent in Disney cartoons, there is no jealousy to mar diverse and combined effort, as is often the case in the major studios. It is communalistic work, under the controlling and inspirational figure of Walt Disney himself, whose sensitive and imaginative spirit permeates all the productive work in the studio. Deservedly, he receives all the responsibility for the success of the cartoons, while the other artists work in co-operative anonymity. In spite of the unconstrained atmosphere, however, the work is by no means chaotic. Inasmuch as twenty-six cartoons must be produced each year (the present booking obligation), a certain definite systematic procedure is compulsory.

A cartoon, from its origin as a rather vague story idea to its final photographing on film, involves about four months of work (as the production-schedule indicates the necessity of an average of one completed cartoon every two weeks, different cartoons are in various stages of development simultaneously). About half of the time consumed for the completion of a cartoon is occupied in preparing a detailed scenario. For this task there is a story department composed



From "Man of Aran," directed by Robert Flaherty, which depicts the arduous life of the inhabitants of the Aran Islands, off the West Coast of Ireland. A Gainsborough Picture.



TOP.
A Disney animator at work.

CENTRE.
Original sketch used to illustrate a Mickey Mouse version of Gulliver's Travels.

BOTTOM.
Walt Disney and some members of the studio in an informal conference.

of ten or so. They think up new ideas, re-work old tales (Disney's re-creations from old legends—*Jack the Giant Killer*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Gulliver's Travels*, etc.—is reminiscent of the practice of the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare), and develop stories already accepted. Disney's greatest influence is felt in this department. It is the quality of the story and the plot detail which is one of the most distinguishing features of the Disney cartoon. Many animators have left the Disney studio for other cartoon work, and yet their artistic effort, clever and imaginative as it may be, is usually lost in second-rate material. Disney's suggestions for stories and gag incidents in the stories are those most often accepted. But he is in no way dictatorial. It is the studio as a group which decides on the stories, and when Disney has a story which the other members of the studio disfavour, it is either shelved or discarded. For instance, *Three Little Pigs* was submitted by Disney for a year before the studio finally approved of it.

When a story is accepted, Disney and the story department scrutinise its possibilities, and then one of its members writes it up in a page synopsis. This synopsis is circulated to about ninety members of the studio, animators, gag men, musical composers, etc., who, incited by the story possibilities, during two weeks create gags, little actions, and other embellishments for the plot. At a luncheon conference lasting three hours or more, the pile of suggestions (mostly quick drawings on paper accompanied by written annotations) are presented, criticised, and discussed by Disney, some members of the story department, the director who is assigned to the cartoon, the layout man (he is the co-ordinating artist, a sort of continuity animator who works out the detailed action which the forty or more animators will follow), the musical director, and several animators. The conference is exciting, animated, and often quite humorous. Hurried sketches are created and passed round. A composer rattles off a theme while another person rhythmically enacts an animal action. When Disney acts out a Mickey Mouse sequence he seems to be the very mouse he has created.

Next, a story-writer completes a detailed scenario, which is illustrated by about fifty sketches of the main incidents in the action. The scenario is then handed over to the director, who, with the aid of Disney, the musical director, and the layout man, forms a detailed time-sheet for every minute movement. This time-sheet is developed on a principle of beats in synchronisation with the musical score, which has been composed coincidentally with the working out of the scenario. Thus each action has been synchronised with the music before either the music is recorded or the action animated. This simultaneous creation of music and action is one of Disney's significant contributions to the progress of the animated cartoon. When the

time-sheet is completed, the director portions out sections of the action to the forty or more animators.

Then the animation begins. As each animator can do at the most in one day a number of drawings equal to five feet of film, it takes about a month for the animation alone. The animation is divided in various ways. The backgrounds are created by regular artists, and only the moving figures are animated. As some of the animators are more proficient for certain incidents and characters in the action (for example, there is one animator who is particularly adept in drawing dancing figures, another in depicting ferocious villains) they are so assigned. It is interesting that Disney himself no longer does any animation, and rarely submits a drawing. The animators, besides being imaginative artists, must be able to vivify characters and their movements. In order to give life to their characters, they resort to all sorts of antics, watch their mirrored reflections as they go through the movements of their subject, watch other people go through motions, and, when the subjects are animals (as they most often are), in order to give them their proper zoological characteristics as well as human attributes, they sometimes resort to observing animals perform in the zoo and on the screen. After a section is sketchily animated, it is photographed and observed by Disney, the director, and the animator as to its convincingness. If it is satisfactory, then girls copy the drawings on celluloid with black paint, or if it is a coloured cartoon in colour. Disney demands a definite quality in his cartoons, and if certain scenes do not seem satisfactory when screened, they must be re-done. Sometimes a whole cartoon is shelved because Disney or some of the other members in the studio do not feel it worthy of the studio. When every sequence is satisfactory, and painted on celluloid, it is filmed. The shooting takes a hundred hours or more, by means of a complexly rigged stop motion camera. The final endorsement, as in the major studios, is given the cartoon at a preview at one of the neighbourhood motion-picture theatres. Occasionally, if a sequence fails to get a reaction from the audience it is changed; but, on account of the carefully worked out and synchronised scenario, there is rarely much changed after the final filming of the cartoon.

After four months, or thereabout, of co-operative labour the cartoon is ready for its brief seven minutes on the screen.

Apart from the creation of the cartoon, there is another communalistic factor in the Disney studio, and that is the course in animated art. Any member of the studio may take the course, which usually requires about six months of study.

The author is indebted for much of the material in this article to Dr. Morkovin, an advisor in the story department at the Disney Studio and professor of cinematography at the University of Southern California, where he has recently organized the first competent exhibition of the making of a Disney cartoon.

THE SYMPHONIC FILM

JOHN GRIERSON

THE SYMPHONIC form is concerned with the orchestration of movement. It sees the screen in terms of flow and does not permit the flow to be broken. Episodes and events if they are included in the action are integrated in the flow. The symphonic form also tends to organise the flow in terms of different movements, *e.g.* movement for dawn, movement for men coming to work, movement for factories in full swing, etc., etc. This is a first distinction.

See the symphonic form as equivalent to the poetic form of, say, Carl Sandburg in "Skyscraper," "Chicago," "The Windy City" and "Slabs of the Sunburnt West." The object is presented as an integration of many activities. It lives by the many human associations and by the moods of the various action sequences which surround it. Sandburg says so with variations of tempo in his description, variations of the mood in which each descriptive facet is presented. We do not ask personal stories of such poetry, for its picture is complete and satisfactory. We need not ask it of documentary. This is a second distinction regarding symphonic form.

These distinctions granted, it is possible for the symphonic form to vary considerably. Basil Wright, for example, is almost exclusively interested in movement, and will build up movement in a fury of design and nuances of design; and for those whose eye is sufficiently trained and sufficiently fine, will convey emotion in a thousand variations on a theme so simple as the portage of bananas (*Cargo from Jamaica*). Some have attempted to relate this movement to the pyrotechnics of pure form, but there never was any such animal. (1) The quality of Wright's sense of movement and of his patterns are distinctively his own and recognisably delicate. As with good painters, there is character in his line and attitude in his composition. (2) There is an overtone in his work which—sometimes after seeming monotony—makes his description uniquely memorable. (3) His patterns invariably weave—not seeming to do so—a positive attitude to the material, which may conceivably relate to (2). The patterns of *Cargo* were more scathing comment on labour at 2d. a hundred bunches (or whatever it is) than mere sociological stricture. His movements—(a) easily down; (b) horizontal; (c) arduously 45° up; (d) down again—conceal, or perhaps construct, a comment.

Flaherty once maintained that the east-west contour of Canada was itself a drama. It was precisely a sequence of down, horizontal, 45° up, and down again.

I use Basil Wright as an example of 'movement in itself'—though movement is never in itself—principally to distinguish those others who add either tension elements or poetic elements or atmospheric elements. I have held myself in the past an exponent of the tension category with certain pretention to the others. Here is a simple example of tension from *Granton Trawler*. The trawler is working its gear in a storm. The tension elements are built up with emphasis on the drag of the water, the heavy lurching of the ship, the fevered flashing of birds, the fevered flashing of faces between waves lurches and spray. The trawl is hauled aboard with strain of men and tackle and water. It is opened in a release which comprises equally the release of men, birds and fish. There is no pause in the flow of movement, but something of an effort as between two opposing forces, has been recorded. In a more ambitious and deeper description the tension might have included elements more intimately and more heavily descriptive of the clanging weight of the tackle, the strain on the ship, the operation of the gear under water and along the ground, the scuttering myriads of birds laying off in the gale. The fine fury of ship and heavy weather could have been brought through to touch the vitals of the men and the ship. In the hauling, the simple fact of a wave breaking over the men, subsiding and leaving them hanging on as though nothing had happened, would have brought the sequence to an appropriate peak. The release could have attached to itself images of, say, birds wheeling high, taking off from the ship, and of contemplative, *i.e.* more intimate, reaction on the faces of the men. The drama would have gone deeper by the greater insight into the energies and reactions involved.

Carry this analysis into a consideration of the first part of *Deserter*, which piles up from a sequence of deadly quiet to the strain and fury—and aftermath—of the strike, or of the strike sequence itself, which piles up from deadly quiet to the strain and fury—and aftermath—of the police attack, and you have indication of how the symphonic shape, still faithful to its own peculiar methods, comes to grip with dramatic issue.

The poetic approach is best represented by *Romance Sentimentale* and the last sequence of *Ekstase*. Here there is description without tension, but the moving description is lit up by attendant images. In *Ekstase* the notion of life renewed is conveyed by a rhythmic sequence of labour, but there are also essential images of a woman and child, a young man standing high over the scene, skyscapes and water. The description of the various moods of *Romance Sentimentale*



From Wilfried Basse's new film "So lebt ein Volk" (So lives a Nation). Production: Basse-Film, Berlin-Dahlem.





From "L'Atalante," directed by Jean Vigo from the scenario by Jean Guinée, featuring Dita Parlo and Michel Simon. Montage by Louis Chavance.

is conveyed entirely by images: in one sequence of domestic interior, in another sequence of misty morning, placid water and dim sunlight. The creation of mood, an essential in the symphonic form, may be done in terms of tempo alone, but is better done if poetic images colour it. In a description of night at sea, there are elements enough aboard a ship to build up a quiet and effective rhythm, but a deeper effect might come by reference to what is happening under water or by reference to the strange spectacle of the birds which, sometimes in ghostly flocks, move silently in and out of the ship's lights.

A recent sequence done by Rotha for his new film indicates the distinction between the three different treatments. He describes the loading of a steel furnace and builds a superb rhythm into the shovelling movements of the men. By creating behind them a sense of fire, by playing on the momentary shrinking from fire which comes into these shovelling movements, he would have brought in the elements of tension. He might have proceeded from this to an almost terrifying picture of what steel work involves. On the other hand, by overlaying the rhythm with, say, such posturing or contemplative symbolic figures, as Eisenstein brought into his *Thunder Over Mexico* material, he would have added the elements of poetic image. The distinction is between (a) a musical or non-literary method; (b) a dramatic method with clashing forces; and (c) a poetic, contemplative, and altogether literary method. These three methods may all appear in one film, but their proportion depends naturally on the character of the director—and his private hopes of salvation.

I do not suggest that one form is higher than the other. There are pleasures peculiar to the exercise of movement which in a sense are tougher—more classical—than the pleasures of poetic description, however attractive and however blessed by tradition these may be. The introduction of tension gives accent to a film, but only too easily gives popular appeal because of its primitive engagement with physical issues and struggles and fights. People like a fight, even when it is only a symphonic one, but it is not clear that a war with the elements is a braver subject than the opening of a flower or, for that matter, the opening of a cable. It refers us back to hunting instincts and fighting instincts, but these plainly do not represent the more civilised fields of appreciation.

It is commonly believed that moral grandeur in art can only be achieved, Greek or Shakespearian fashion, after a general laying out of the protagonists, and that no head is unbowed which is not bloody. This notion is a philosophic vulgarity. Of recent years it has been given the further blessing of Kant in his distinction between the æsthetic of pattern and the æsthetic of achievement, and

beauty has been considered somewhat inferior to the sublime. The Kantian confusion comes from the fact that he personally had an active moral sense, but no active æsthetic one. He would not otherwise have drawn the distinction. So far as common taste is concerned, one has to see that we do not mix up the fulfilment of primitive desires and the vain dignities which attach to that fulfilment, with the dignities which attach to man as an imaginative being. The dramatic application of the symphonic form is not, *ipso facto*, the deepest or most important. A future consideration of forms neither dramatic nor symphonic, but dialectic, will reveal this more plainly.

KINEMATOGRAPH YEAR BOOK, 1934. (London: Odhams. 10s.) An essential book of reference for all connected with the cinema. The year's events, films registered, who's who, and a classified directory are included, along with other useful information.

"THE CINEMA" BUYERS' GUIDE. (London: Cinema Press. 15s.) Contains brief reviews of the year's films with details of production and cast. A valuable handbook for students and secretaries.

FOR FILMGOERS ONLY. (London: Faber. 2s. 6d.) Lectures delivered to the London Y.W.C.A. Central Club. Paul Rotha on the development of the cinema; Andrew Buchanan on propaganda; Mary Field on educational films; R. S. Lambert on "Why we get the films we do"; C. A. Lejeune on what to look for in films. A useful guide for those who have just "discovered" cinema.

THE CINEMA AND THE PUBLIC. (London: Nicholson and Watson. 1s.) An "exposure" of the British Film Institute. Contains both opinions and facts, which the discerning reader may separate to his own satisfaction.

EXPRESS TO HOLLYWOOD. By Victor McLagen. (London: Jarrold. 12s. 6d.) The life-story of a star. A feast for fans and an interesting sidelight on the inside of the commercial movie world.

PICTURE PEOPLE. By Olga Rosmanith. (London: Long. 7s. 6d.) A novelette of Hollywood life in all its absurdities. May help to disillusion star worshippers.

THE STRANGER'S RETURN. By Phil Stong. (London: Barker. 7s. 6d.) Here we find in words the atmosphere and characters of the American Middle West which Vidor re-created in his film. Lionel Barrymore's Grandpa Storr did justice to Stong's powers of characterisation. Two novels written, two novels filmed: perhaps Stong will cast his next in film form and not wait for adaptation.

WHITHER COLOUR?

ERIC ELLIOTT

THERE IS evidence by this time of an apathy, if not an antipathy, towards the coloured film. The trial began with subjects in Edison's Kinetoscope, 1891, before moving pictures were projected. With the era of the Screen, an indulgence in cosmetics naturally continued; and conspicuous in 1904 was a painted version of Melies' *Trip to the Sun*. Short or long, educational or dramatic, such chromoscopic imitations appeared in the programmes of all succeeding years.

You may reason that artificial colours are not a fair test. I reason that all the other processes are artificial too. "Natural colours" is a convenient misnomer; autocolours would be a better term. When results are compared the advantage often lies with that reproduction we call artificial. At least the stencilled film continues to be countenanced by patrons as much as its rival.

The trials of the natural-colour processes need to be more discriminately reviewed. Wanting space, I must take notice of nothing until the introduction of Technicolour in 1920. From then onward this system shared the scenes—hence also the circulation and publicity—of most of America's world-boasted super films, apart from its all-coloured investments, remembering especially the prestige of Fairbanks' *The Black Pirate*. Then Al Jolson, singing about a rainbow round his shoulders, started the talkie boom that was to incur a new load of rainbows for all our shoulders in the form of talkie coloured attachments.

Why, then, do we still have films in black-and-white? Practicability? That question fails, in face of practice. It may be added that, twenty years back, topical reels were recorded and exhibited in auto-colours without departure from the normal time-table. The question of expensiveness likewise fails. First parasitically fostering itself for twelve years or so, then subsidised by the talkie gold mine, colour cinematography has enjoyed an economic advantage. Even that old alibi about "awaiting the supervision of an artist" holds good no longer; and never had it much to do with the question of colour's popularity.

So the mystery grows and grows. Neither Hollywood nor Critical Opinion appears competent to clear it up, save to look around for their old friend "the technical solution" to help them out. This, too, when Critical Opinion, even more than those commercially concerned, has assured us that natural-colour photoplays have been

“wondrous,” “exquisite,” “like old masters,” “like Nature herself.” Go back to *The Black Pirate* (1926); to Friese-Greene (1924); to *The Glorious Adventure* (Prizma, 1922); to Gaumont’s luxurious three-colour Chronochrome (1913); to Kinemacolor (1911). Read up the testimonials. If Critical Opinion can go into raptures about photochromy on the screen, much readier should the indiscriminate fans be to extol it.

Besides, it is human nature to tolerate imperfections in everything, until something better is put before us. So, if colour reproduction were a vital condition in the moving picture, mechanical crudities could not seriously stand in its way. After all, Nature is not very exacting, apart from the particularity of human complexions. Impossible to hit upon a green, a brown, or a yellow that does not represent some true appearance of a leaf. Then nearly everything the popular eye demands from colour, all its artificialness, all its extravagance—the sensational and the sentimental—can be supplied by quite a clumsy process. A venture like Kinemacolor, by its very evidence of practicability, profitableness and merit, is evidence of limitations not concerned with those factors. To-day also a market could be exploited through the enormous interest and attraction in coloured subjects. But—there is enormous interest and attraction in the movie dramas too. The markets must either be separated or be reconciled.

Colour is not missing in the movies. The real peculiarity is that our intelligence demurs at the presence of colour in a life-like representation, but never at the absence of it. The achievement of black-and-white drawings, photographs, and moving pictures ought to be regarded as a positive achievement. The pure photograph exerts an emotional influence so moving and so instinctive as to be unreached by any other form of picture. It registers some indefinable quality of the subject. It evokes a vivid recognition. More: from the box-office point of view, it is human.

To colour it is to transform it into the dead product of the hand. If it is a portrait of a face intimately known—and a film star’s face is intimately known—individuality and personality disappear. Vulgar people take a naïve pride in a coloured enlargement of someone dear to them; but for emotional purposes they are careful to keep a copy in black-and-white.

In so far as this refractoriness of colour disturbs the illusion of realness, it nullifies what is vital in our medium. This is, in a way, the most important part of the problem, but since it leads into a theme far out of our present path, I must be content to assume it is agreed upon, this need of some peculiar realness in the Image Play that is active in prompting a mental reciprocation of real experience.

Why colours seem unreal may be less a psychological than a

visual problem. Not so much a pigmentary problem, either, because any colour reproduction—even paintings, even the best printing processes—have something false about them; and even an actual spectacle can be made to *appear* artificial in its hues.

Colour seems to be an entity in itself. It trespasses on the field of vision. It provides an abstract spectacle imposed over the spectacle concrete. Monochrome allows the eye to come closer, as it were, to concentrate more, to absorb more, to digest more. As infra-red rays, X-rays, and all the other rays afford our vision a means of deeper penetration, so black-and-white photography pierces a fog of light sensations.

The painter gets at the nude in defiance of prude. The sculptor, I contend, goes one better by stripping off the colour as well as the clothes. Colour brings visual indigestion.

These effects add to the troubles of pictorial composition. The eye can have no softer bearing than the tones of light and shade. Colour seeks rather to imprison the vision; and when there are casual, accidental colourings the field is strewn with obstacles, until the eye finally lands in a bunker. Painters are satisfied that they have turned these disadvantages to their own advantage. Lowbrows, failing such satisfaction, prefer paintings to be over-coloured, so that at least they can extract the sensation of colour as colour.

Circumstances of the cinema—which I shall *not* apologise for—inevitably widen the argument. A canvas, usually, is comfortably within one's field of vision, and the light around you relieves the sight. The cinema screen necessarily fills the whole field of vision and annihilates consciousness of all other existence. This stresses an unnatural condensation of colour, just as there is an unnatural condensation of sound within the talkie frame. Free of colour, the black-and-white shadows on the screen join swifter the shadows of the hall. We can make a colour amalgam around the picture, but experience shows that the mind makes a much better settlement if left confronted with the ultimatum of one uncompromising boundary of sight.

Colour enthusiasts refer gleefully to the "pull" of gorgeous posters and magazine covers. When, however, you consider that these draw the eye to themselves amid a world of competing lights and forms, you get an idea of the force we are playing with in the cinema confines. Signal-lights also ought to warn us in more senses than one.

The chromotechnics of the screen cast me into a dungeon, with darkness and suffocation. Lost is the very essence of cinema, its space, and freedom, and light. Nothing like it on earth; although in the weird world underseas Technicolour seems singularly apt. Ignore the limitations of colour photography. Remember that in certain circumstances of vision, colours will always tend to denaturalise

themselves. Above all, daylight in real existence, apart from its local decompositions into hue, prevails imponderously around every visible thing.

Screw up your eyes at a stage scene, squeeze out all the light you can spare. The result can be uncannily like a Technicoloured interior, even to the queer complexions. If you try the same trick on a Technicolour picture, the effect is an improvement! Colours become lighter and more distinguished, the flesh tints especially appearing more life-like.

Artificially coloured films are superior in their preservation of light. There is not that effect of depression, not to say oppression, to be found in natural colour photography. Moreover, the simpleness of the tints produces at least an elementary harmony, and often a finer delicacy. Our autocoloured reproductions should be severely diluted, by fair means or foul.

As there are physical, so there are mental conditions in actual life to modify the impertinence as well as the exuberance of colour. The want of such protection makes itself evident in a coloured reproduction of any kind. What should be latent, what is irrelevant, is all forced without mercy into one's perception. A man can go a life-time without learning the true colours of a friend (symbolicalists, please note). He can fall in love with a girl with only the haziest notion whether her eyes are blue or grey. In a picture, these colours merely advertise themselves as abstract patterns. Often it is asserted that we cannot dream in colour—a fallacy, mind you, but not without a foundation of truth.

To remark further the cinema's distinctions. Animated, the subject moves as well as the eye, and two motions have to correspond. An idiot wearing a scarlet scarf may walk from the foreground and far into the distance, and drag the helpless eye in chains behind him. Colours of stationary subjects (composing the bulk of the scene) mislead in another manner. They tend to make everything inert. Even perched on a moving object, colour appears to lack the agility of form. At times the forms seem to be struggling to move themselves beneath the weight of the colours. The dragging tendency is aggravated, I consider, by the known inclination of colours to jump into discrepant focal planes.

Nature demonstrates everywhere that colour is static in suggestion. Each creature loses an apparent ability of motion as it increases its colours. A peacock could never look swift. Such inaptitude is, indeed, utilised ecologically.* If this is so, it causes a serious

* With certain natural colour processes still more fatigue might be supposed to result from the separation of the complementary images into successive frames. On the other hand it is a fact, I believe, that with colour the eye allows more latitude in a synthesis of animation. Incidentally this may point to a persistency in the colour sensation that is objectionable in other ways.

retardation, not only in locomotion but in the finer mobility of facial expression. Ultimately, there is a similar influence on the *tempo*.

Brief, too, our changing scenes; and varying their scales. In the long run the all-coloured film can be more monotonous than the monotone film. It reveals yet more that real life does not permit an observation of colours commensurate with that lavished on us by the photochromatic drama. Hundreds upon hundreds of coloured records are thrown at us without remission, and the eye has no source of escape. No matter how different the subjects, the hues tend to become a stream of abstract, satiating sensations. It is like music trying to dispense with silence.

Undoubtedly there are technical improvements to anticipate, especially if we bear in mind that even objections against elaborateness of equipment and operation in the theatre are hardly valid in face of the talkie manœuvre. Observe, though, that colour has not yet provided in the box-office that irresistible lever that sound provided to make such an upheaval possible.

And that, first and finally, is what I want to impress. Claude Friese-Greene did once say that picture-goers would have to be educated to an appreciation of colour films. This was corroboration from a source where I least expected to find it; for, of all the colourites, inventors who have devoted everything they have to a practical solution of the problem are the ones I can most excuse for assuming that the public is clamouring for a solution.

If it had not been generally assumed, without leave to question, that picture-goers would turn away from black-and-white movies to coloured movies as greedily as a schoolboy turns away from bread to chocolate, inventors and investors would have saved a vast amount of effort and money. They would have tackled the problem forwards instead of backwards. They would have recognised that, even in the case of an article definitely desired by the public, application rather than cheapness, ingenuity or publicity, is the factor that finally counts in the market. Mechanically and commercially, as well as dramatically, coloured film has been badly mishandled.

“Awaiting the technical solution”! That is the stalemate position our colour was in ten, say twenty, years ago. Our first task is to make colour *wanted* in the cinema. Solve that problem, and the inventors will have in their hands the only weapon they really need for their advancement. Technical perfection comes last, not first. The moving picture proved it. The gramophone proved it. The radio proved it. The talkies proved it. I cannot think of any scope in popular entertainment that has not proved it.

CONVERSATION PIECES

ETHICS FOR MOVIE

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI
STUART LEGG

Cavalcanti.—One of the chief difficulties which confronted me during my recent work in France was that of assembling an ideal team. Some of those working with me would be intellectuals; each was determined to have his own say and his own way in the making of the picture. Others would be hard-working, level-headed technicians, too modest to push their ideas to the fore, and apt to be overwhelmed by the hard-boiled commercial executives. It is extremely difficult to get together a well-balanced team where each man is content to have equal say in his own *métier* in developing the spirit of the film.

Legg.—But if every responsible person is to have equal say, an impossible conflict will immediately arise. A single authority must have final word, and the obvious authority is the director.

Cavalcanti.—I don't believe in the director in the position of dictator. The best American films—Chaplin and Lloyd—are the result of close team-work. The same applies to the great Russian films; *Potemkin* was not the work of Eisenstein alone, but of a competent team of technicians working with him in the spirit of the film. The best directors are those who can draw the individual ability from each member of their staff and direct the sum total towards the subject in hand.

Legg.—I admit that there's a great deal of nonsense talked about 'self-expression' in the director, but there must be a point at which his own methods emerge and assume control.

Cavalcanti.—No director can make a film by himself. He is dependent at every step upon skilled and specialised technicians. A good film is that which in some way allows the skill of each technician to bring out some special quality of its subject, and *not* the special quality of its director. If a director is determined to reveal his own personality, he should indulge in one of the recognised arts.

Legg.—Cinema is still in its baby stages. Until it becomes more mature it's idle to lay down laws which may soon be out of date.

Cavalcanti.—True, where technical development is concerned. But all the signs point to film-making becoming more and more the domain of technical experts. Therefore it is safe to say that cinema

can in no case be the expression of one man's personality, but must represent the achievement of collective effort. One of the essential elements of art is personal expression of the artist. So cinema can never be an art.

Legg.—That's the kind of statement that takes the spice out of life. For our little reputations' sakes it is necessary that we should wear the sacred halo of artistry. Otherwise our dignity and self-respect may be seriously impaired.

Cavalcanti.—But isn't it true?

Legg.—Perfectly.

Cavalcanti.—Another essential of art is equilibrium—*état de repos*. That is, all art must take into account a happening at a given moment—even architecture and music. Film cannot do this; its whole essence is movement and progression.

Legg.—How, then, are we going to define cinema? All manner of persons gather in the *salle obscure*—the worker, the academe, the housewife, the æsthete. What function does it fulfil in their lives?

Cavalcanti.—Is it the need to share a common sexual intimacy with Garbo or Chevalier?

Legg.—Is it the necessity to gather together in a mystical atmosphere to seek consolation for worldly ills?

Cavalcanti.—Don't you think that the ever-similar arrangement of the programme—comedy, cartoon, newsreel, organ, feature—satisfies an everyday need for ritual?

Legg.—It looks as though it were a public gathering to indulge in waves of mass beatific emotion.

Cavalcanti.—Doesn't the word religion come from the Latin *religare*?

Legg.—Exactly—to bind together. And no religion is so universal.

Cavalcanti.—The *salle obscure* binds people together in a 'dim religious light.'

Legg.—Most religions prescribe a sensual adoration of at least one of their deities.

Cavalcanti.—The need for a common refuge from the world is still deeply rooted in all human beings.

Legg.—And the craving for an outward visible symbol for an inward spiritual act.

Cavalcanti.—But the worship of stars by the fans is as heretical as the worship of directors by movie-æsthetes.

Legg.—Surely it will be repudiated, as Protestantism repudiated the adoration of the Catholic saints.

Cavalcanti.—And again, the present preoccupation with mythical figures is a perversion. The whole emphasis of the cinema must fall upon its subject.

Legg.—The business of cinema is to crystallise an attitude to a sociological trend—and to see that it does not betray this universal trust.

Cavalcanti.—The crime of the commercials is that they use the cinema as a drug to maintain their best of all possible worlds. The frivolity of the pseudo-intellectuals avoids any urgent issue whatever.

Legg.—All religions become parasites at that point where they extort money from their followers on false pretences. Unfortunately, the cinema has made a cunning practice of that art from the day of its foundation.

Cavalcanti.—How strange it is that every nation creates a censorship of film morals while no international convocation exists to ensure that the film-going public is not fleeced. . . .

Legg.— . . . when the proper duty of cinema (in terms of Reality) is to be the work of the community for the community.

Cavalcanti.—In any case, Fascism, as the political achievement of individualism, can never pervert the cinema to its own ends, since it bears no relation to collective spirit.

Legg.—No; the subjects of modern life are collective subjects. The future of movie will lie in interpreting them.

CINEMATIC DESIGN, by Leonard Hacker (Boston: Photographic Pub. Co., \$2.50). A valuable and intelligent discussion of the principles of form, rhythm, and relativity for amateur film-makers, illustrated with a collection of short scenarios remarkable for a quaint and consistent use of the dissolve in place of the cut.

THE CHILD MANUELA. By Christa Winsloe. (London: Chapman and Hall. 7s. 6d.) The story of the film, *Madchen in Uniform*, was originally conceived and written as a novel, though play and film appeared first. The novel, now published for the first time, deals largely with the life of the child Manuela at a period earlier than that which the film portrays. It is interesting both for its intrinsic merit and for comparison with Leontine Sagan's film treatment of its theme.

CATALOGUE OF THE G.P.O. FILM LIBRARY. (London: Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Gratis.) Should be in the hands of all organisers of non-theatrical performances. In an introduction, Sir Kingsley Wood explains why this national asset is maintained by the Post Office.

MODERN ART (London: F. J. Ward, 3 Baker Street, W.1. 1s.) A profusely illustrated catalogue of impressionist and post-impressionist painting, a study of which is essential to all interested in modern visual art. Copies of the prints illustrated are obtainable in excellent coloured reproductions.

THE FILM ABROAD

GERMANY ON THE SCREEN

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

IN A long, systematic journey through Germany, Wilfried Basse, known as the producer of *Markt in Berlin* (Market in Berlin) and *Abbruch und Aufbau eines Hauses* (Fall and Rise of a House), has gathered a great mass of material, out of which the film on Germany *So lebt ein Volk* (So lives a Nation) is created. Basse does not consider a geographical arrangement of the material satisfactory. His film is not merely a substitute for a journey through Germany. It gives not only a *picture* of the country, but makes its nature and characteristics comprehensible. It emphasises essentials, creates types, according to Kant's principle: "Vision without comprehension is empty; comprehension without vision is blind." From what angle is this gigantic subject approached? Different classifications, sharp contrasts, as city and country, poor and rich, work and pleasure, past and present, are useful and necessary, but none is so predominant as to form the basis of such a film. The arrangement of the material and the classification under various headings, as children, church-buildings, vehicles, domestic animals, etc. (this Basse did for the preparation of the *montage*), is a pedantic combination of related details, which is useful as a first survey of the whole, but does not evolve a principle of montage.

The mutual influence of natural picture material and organizing mind must develop an organic structure that has a strong, rigid skeleton but at the same time gives an impression of the free character of things grown in nature. Some groupings are cleverly formed, others quite naturally felt and left unchanged. Basse's material, for instance, contains certain complex groups which can be joined to the rest without further arrangement. There are themes like the Ruhr district and its panorama of chimneys, its rolling-mills, its iron-foundries; the strenuous life of its people in the shadow of the coal bings; the great port of Hamburg; and various small themes, as a procession, a creamery, a week-end colony, five-o'clock tea at the seaside. On the other hand, a systematic arrangement is just as essential for the structure of this film. Basse wants to show how the style of living in former times is still affecting modern life—how big a part the past still plays in the modern world. There is the smallholder, cultivating his fields with the primitive implements of a prehistoric time,

beside mowers, threshing machines, tractors, and cattle farms. Or there are historical buildings, lively reminders of the past.

Basse boldly frees himself from geographical connections and conditions. He constructs, for instance, a concentrated picture of a medieval town by joining photographs which have been taken at different places in Germany. He does not simply add picture to picture, but interweaves their single motives of action in such a way as to create the impression of a lively unity. Different views in different Gothic towns are photographed; the various scenes fitted into the general picture to embody the idea of a Gothic town, which, as it is shown, does not really exist. The façade of a cathedral may be taken in Lübeck, the interior in Stralsund, but in spite of that, the union of things related in age and style creates an intense representation, because the best subjects, angles, lighting, are chosen to suit the composition. Such a principle of montage work puts aside those objects which are well known and visited by the sightseer, because such pictures would bring the audience to a false reaction, to a question Basse does not like asked—"Where did you shoot that?"

The lively interrelation of different principles of structure allows a consistent line to be taken, a dynamic development. From the prehistoric forms of a primitive economic system the film leads historically up over the Gothic style to Renaissance, from baroque to rococo, from the *Biedermeierzeit* to the complacency of present middle-class society, the provincial character of which makes possible the crescendo of a modernised city's activity. The description of the city is completed by showing its sources of power, slaughter-house, produce factory, post office, traffic. Town life necessitates recreation. The film takes us to resorts and week-end places, and this leads up with another crescendo to the great centres of life such as sea-ports and industrial regions, which show their characteristic features not only in their prosperity but in the misery and strain of a workman's life. This again leads up to a concise report of a modern economic crisis, of unemployment, and finishes with promising pictures of the latest labour services and reorganisation of welfare centres.

Basse does not want his film to be accompanied by explanatory remarks. Helped only by a few concise titles and the music, the visual composition of the film is intended to make its own meaning clear.

Wolfgang Zeller contributes the music which reflects the visual moods harmoniously and unites the ever-changing pictures on the screen. It emphasises sharp contrasts—from the gay to the serious, from the complacent to the hustle. Thus picture and sound produce a constant variety which holds the spectator's interest and stresses the essential.

Translated by MARGRET KAPPELS.

AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA is the third largest consuming country of British and American films. Few European films get shown, and picture-goers view the world almost entirely through the eyes of Hollywood and Elstree. The Commonwealth Film Censor sees to it that our morals are closely guarded, and when a foreign film does creep through, it is, more often than not, hacked to pieces. An obscure Sydney theatre, now closed, put on *The Blue Angel*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*, *Cain*, *The Last Company*, and several Ufa pictures. *The Russian Five-Year Plan* and *Turksib* are the only Soviet films we have seen, and even they were nearly excluded because of their "Communistic and propaganda tendencies." The limited population of Australia makes it financially impossible to import original versions of foreign films, and thus Australia is many years behind in cinema education. If we were given the opportunity of special screenings by "art" theatres, as in other countries, we would take our films more seriously. At present we are denied that enviable experience. LEON S. STONE.

HUNGARY

AFTER TWO years of slow development, the Hunnia Studios at Budapest have started production on a big scale. The production of films in this country is handicapped by the fact that there are only about two hundred cinemas. Since the seceding countries have entirely blocked the import of Hungarian pictures, there is no outside market. This means that the production costs of a picture can be earned only if it is made in multi-lingual versions.

On the other hand, producing costs are considerably smaller in Hungary than in other countries, because the Hungarian Government, to foster national production, allows every producer making a Hungarian version of his film to use the Hunnia Studios (which belong to an institution of the State—the Film-Fond) free of charge. Production costs are thus estimated to be 50 per cent. smaller than in any other country.

It is well known that a number of prominent authors, scenarists, directors and stars are Hungarians. Alexander Korda, Lajos Birô, Michael Kertész, Poul Fejös, and Vilma Bánky are all Hungarians.

The Hunnia Studios are quite near to Budapest, the capital of Hungary, with open country attached to them. They are equipped with Tobis-Klang sound apparatus. The film-developing and printing machines are mostly De Brie and Erneman makes. The cutting rooms are equipped with Askania and Hungarian cutting desks.

Two stages, 72 by 80 feet and 85 by 100 feet, are in the main building of Hunnia Studios, which also comprises about thirty dressing-rooms, with cold and hot water.

Last year was started with the Hungarian and Roumanian versions of *The Ghost Train*, by Lajos Biro, followed by *The Vine*, a short Hungarian folk-play. In May and June a great patriotic picture was produced by Sári Fedák, a famous actress of vaudeville and Hungarian plays. In July German Universal Pictures, a branch institution of Carl Laemmle's, was producing a comedy (*Skandal in Budapest*), with Franciska Gaál and Poul Hörbiger in Hungarian and German versions. The most promising picture yet produced is *Rokoczi Marsch*, in Hungarian and German versions. The cast includes Gustav Fröhlich, Tibor Halmay, Puffi Huszár, and Oscar Beregi. In the Hungarian version many of the best stage-actors of Hungary are acting. The picture is of Hungarian national character, set in the most lovely Hungarian country-side, with the background of the manœuvres of the Hungarian army. The picture was directed by Stephan Székely, and the music was written by Poul Abraham and includes some ancient folk-songs. It has had the greatest success of any Hungarian picture. The producers are at the present considering the possibilities of making an English version.

F. R. ORBÁN.

SOUTH AFRICA

NOTWITHSTANDING GREAT difficulties in procuring suitable films and a place for showing with proper equipment, the film society movement seems to be gaining ground. A film society has been formed at Wellington in the Cape, while similar movements are on foot in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, and at Durban. The Cape Film Society showed fragments from the first part of Ivens' *Zuider Zee* film. A short film, *Boy*, by the Dutch cineaste, Dick Laan, was enthusiastically received. The Dutch *avant-garde* seems to have found a firm footing with certain cultural societies here, and it is almost certain that Dutch films, like Teunissen's *William of Orange*, will attract a good deal of attention. A very interesting evening was provided when Vice-Admiral E. R. Evans, at the request of the Cape Film Society, gave a complementary talk during the screening of Byrd's *South Pole* film. The Cape Film Society closed its season this year with a joint function in collaboration with the French Circle of the University of Cape Town, when *Joan of Arc* was presented.

The Minister of the Interior has decided to establish a film archives in which will be deposited films of historical or cultural

interest relating to South Africa. Attempts are being made to trace a short film made of the late President Kruger of the Transvaal Republic. Edgar Hyman, who made several film records during the Boer War is in charge of the work of collecting these films for deposit in the new S.A. Film Archives.

The Film-Radio Commission of the S.A. Akademie vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns, a cultural society, has decided to award the Academy's medal for 1933 to C. P. Beyers in recognition of his work in connection with film-making. The Academy also recommended that the Carnegie grant for the study of film technique be awarded to Mr. Beyers. Mr. Beyers is an amateur who has made several interesting film studies of the Kruger National Park.

H. R. VAN DER POEL.

MISCELLANY

ART AND REPRODUCTION

RUDOLF ARNHEIM, in his article, "Film and Radio," was "tempted to speak of . . . an entirely new branch of art which might be called *reproductive art*." It is a little to be regretted that he yielded to the temptation so easily. For, after all, is such a term justifiable?

Under the term "reproductive art" Arnheim includes film, photography, radio, gramophone, and sound-film. In the first place, take still photography. A photographer may proceed in either of three ways: he may take his camera about with him on chance and snap pictures on the inspiration of the moment; or he may be struck by a subject, decide on the best conditions to take it, and then take it; or a subject may occur to him independently of anything external, which he then reproduces in reality and photographs. All these methods of approach are also known to the painter, with appropriate modifications. The painter may be suddenly struck by the pictorial possibilities of a scene and make a hasty sketch, which is elaborated at leisure; or he may find a scene which attracts him, take his easel and paint the picture on the spot; or he may make up a picture entirely out of his head, and reproduce it on canvas directly (not being under the obligation of the photographer to reproduce it first in reality, although he may get help from models). In each case there is first a mental image, and finally a picture. The photograph follows the same laws of composition as the painting, appeals to the same kind of sensibility, and can be judged by the same standards. It is true that it is bad art to make a photograph look like

a painting, or a painting like a photograph; but only as it is bad architecture to make a reinforced concrete factory look like a Doric temple. It is a question of media. But, if this is the case, can we say not merely that photography and painting are different arts, but that they belong to different classes of art?

Coming to films: is there art in the simple reproduction of a stage play or variety turn? Obviously not; and the result is not true film. But is there art in the reproduction of a Mickey Mouse cartoon? Is there selection of angles, selection of viewpoint, or anything else? There cannot be. The camera's only job is to reproduce the object (that is, the drawing) set before it as clearly as possible. Yet the result is admitted by most people to be true film. Are there, then, two kinds of film, belonging to widely separated genera of arts?

Take the third case: radio. Reproduction of a piece of music is admittedly not radio art. Reproduction of a stage play, by analogy with films, is unlikely to be so. But according to Arnheim, Goethe's "Faust" is more a radio play than a stage drama, and therefore a radio production of "Faust" is radio art. What difference between the stage and radio production is so essential that it transmutes "Faust" into a different kind of art? Or is it not the case that radio drama is simply an improved way of obtaining the same effect on the spectator as in stage drama?

A play, "Easter 1916," produced at the Dublin Gate Theatre, was mostly made up of speeches off-stage. These were accompanied by a simple and thematically unimportant, though pleasing, visual setting, which remained substantially unchanged throughout. All the information, and nearly all the emotion, was conveyed verbally. Are we to believe that if this play were broadcast (which would need no change except the elimination of the setting) the effect would be something different not only in degree, but in kind?

Photography and painting, radio plays and stage drama, cartoon-film and normal story-film are not different arts but different techniques. The only new art is that of the film, and it is new because a succession of visual images cannot be created without the help of some mechanical apparatus. The only new departure made possible by radio, gramophone, and sound-strip is the orchestration of natural sounds, and this will very probably prove to be a branch of music. The effect of the spoken word is not magically transmuted simply because it happens to come through a loud-speaker.

The film uses reality because it cannot help doing so, and the reality is not the first thing. The first thing is the image in the mind, and the reality is then chosen so that the resulting photograph will resemble, as closely as possible, the original image.

G. F. DALTON.



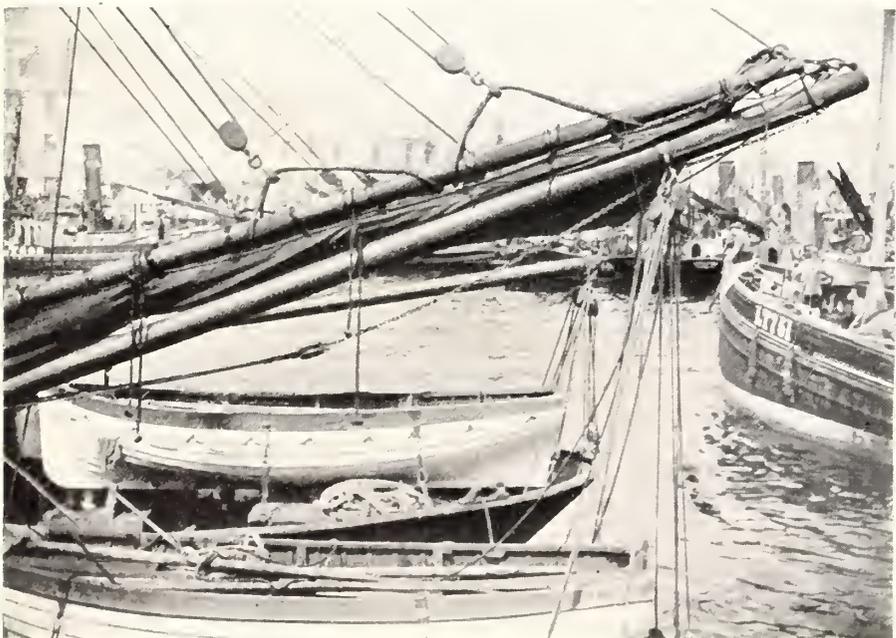
Advance stills from "Kongo Raid," a London Films production directed by Zoltan Korda. The exteriors for the film, which is adapted from Edgar Wallace's "Sanders of the River," were taken in Uganda and the Congo. The photography is by Osmond Borrodaile and Bernard Browne.



A SHETLAND LYRIC

THE RUGGED ISLAND, stills of which appear on this and the opposite page, is an admirable example of what the independent film-maker can do with courage and initiative. Produced, directed and photographed by Jenny Brown, who has already made several short films of life in Shetland, it is a study of changing conditions in the Islands and of the dissatisfaction of youth with the old standards of living. Certain weaknesses in the scenario are compensated for by the naturalness of the acting and a fine sense of composition and form which gives Miss Brown's photography of the sea-girt, rocky landscape an impressive beauty.

The importance of *The Rugged Island* is that it is a personal achievement, conceived and fashioned almost single-handed, free from any sort of commercial domination, and pointing the way to a method of individual film-making considerably nearer the ideal than is possible under the usual conditions of commercial production.





THE RUGGED ISLAND

THE SCENARIO of *The Rugged Island* was built around two crofter families, the idea behind the story being to express through these selected lives the story of all the Shetland Island people: the hard struggle for a living; the desire of youth, to whom closer contact with the rest of the world through wireless and newspapers has brought unrest and dissatisfaction with a mere existence, to try their luck in a wider sphere; and the difficulties that bar their way, lack of actual money, and the dependence of the old folk, who have grown prematurely old in their battle to win food and clothing from sea and land.

We were a film unit of ten with very little filming experience, but

we knew what results we wanted and considered amongst ourselves the best way to get them. The directing and camera work was my job. I had one Eyemo camera with which I had shot five thousand feet of interest film the previous summer. John Gilbertson, an islander, as well as acting the hero of the story was the practical man-of-all-work, and did anything from mending the camera to constructing all the sets for interior shots. The heroine, Enga S. Stout, took on a variety of jobs, from whitewashing the walls of the house to leading the borrowed cow from its home to the set when needed. The other members of the cast lent a hand when necessary, and the old folk were always ready and willing to play their part when they were needed.

Weather, fortunately, was exceptionally good, and the northern atmosphere steadily clear, for I shot almost consistently with a K2 filter at 8 from May until November, when I had to open up to 5.6 or 4, though I very often still clung to the favourite K2 filter.

The croft one family lived on was used as their background in the film. For the other family a derelict house was repaired and thatched and the land retrieved from the hillside. For the interiors another ruin, five miles away, was converted into a very home-like “but” room. This room had to act in turn as the “but” of three crofters’ houses, a difficulty which was overcome by manufacturing three different types of fireplace, changing whitewashed walls to wall-paper, and varying furniture, photographs, texts, clocks, dishes, etc.

As the film came back developed, the rough first cutting was done on dull days in a deserted church hall converted into a studio, and the final cutting was done in the south when the film was completed. Cutting finally your own stuff I find the hardest part of filming. Besides that, it is almost impossible to forget all that went to make each shot and see the film as a stranger; to completely cut out those shots and scenes it took days of hard work to get is almost physically painful. When the cuts are made, of course, one wonders why one ever hesitated.

There are thousands of stories in Scotland and England for the independent film producer. Camera instinct, capital, and common sense are the chief essentials. It’s expensive, of course, profiting by your own mistakes, but at least you remember them. There is one very important business point—if you want to market your stuff, make certain beforehand the boundary lines of each market, documentary, etc., and keep within them. Otherwise you may have lovely material, but no one will handle it.

JENNY BROWN

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

FACT OR FICTION?

FORSYTH HARDY

AFTER *Henry VIII*, the deluge. The remarkable and unexpected success of Korda's spectacular experiment with history has sent his fellow-producers scurrying to their text-books, there to search for romantic heroes and heroines with traits of character sufficiently and suitably startling to make the story of their lives attractive on the screen. The search is taking the course we expected, and in addition to four versions of the life of Mary Queen of Scots (!), we are to have Charles II, Louis XVI and Napoleon, Queen Elizabeth, Marie Antoinette and Nell Gwynn. The list is representative rather than complete, and does not include the less credible rumours: Clive Brook as Julius Cæsar and Frederic March as Antony.

It ought to be recognised that this sudden interest in historical characters does not have its source in a disinterested desire among the film producers to educate the movie millions about the events of the past. Enviously watching the success of *Henry VIII*, they have realised that history, made to measure for the screen, can be attractive romantic material; and that the public will come, in crowds and uncritically, to see the stars as kings and queens and princes. As with all but the exceptional film in the cinema as we know it, the aim is entertainment: it is not to revive documentary evidence or to provide illustrations for the history text-books.

Has the film, then, no responsibility towards history? Complete and exact historical accuracy, though preferable when possible, is not to be pursued as an end in itself. "There is nothing more futile," Korda has written, "than to attempt to satisfy the painstaking exactitude of the expert." An example of an unreasonable demand for accuracy came recently from a critic who protested that only one of the characters in *Henry VIII*, Anne of Cleves, bore any recognisable resemblance to her original. But it is patently ridiculous to expect a film producer to secure a cast exactly similar in face and physique to the historical characters being represented. Nor is complete historical accuracy always possible. It has been pointed out, for example, that the historical facts and recorded dialogue in connection with the encounter between Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves would not pass any censor in the world.

Of real importance, however, are the distinctive spirit of the character and the general atmosphere of the period. The accurate

representation and re-creation of those must be pursued and is to be praised. If there is to be only a superficial resemblance to the original, then the film has no justifiable claim to the historical names and associations (and, incidentally, publicity value), and is no better than any other costume melodrama which is content with the cardboard kings and queens of Ruritania and Arcadia.

There is a social reason why the grossly-distorting historical film is to be condemned. Such is the composition of the movie audience that the majority will be unable from their own knowledge, to compare the impression given with the historical facts; and thus what is related on the screen will come to represent their entire knowledge of the incidents and characters described. Where the description is accurate—except perhaps for minor errors apparent only to the expert—the result will be educative and praiseworthy; but where the description is grossly inaccurate the result will be a regrettable dissemination of false information.

From this point of view, the quarter's two chief historical films are hardly faultless. In *Catherine the Great* we find no evidence of a ruthlessly ambitious woman who was probably a party to the murder of her husband, and who proceeded to rule thereafter with the brutality typical of the period. In *Queen Christina* we find a daughter of Gustavus Adolphus whose abdication to join a young Spanish envoy comes as a complete surprise to her people, and is accompanied by none of the sordid preliminary discussions recorded in history. I leave it to the experts to decide whether or not the producers are entitled to invite us to see Catherine of Russia and Christina of Sweden or whether they would have been more honest to claim no more than Ruritania as the background for some costumed romance.

Consideration of *Catherine the Great* apart, the quarter has produced no outstanding British films. *Waltzes from Vienna* has revealed Hitchcock's craftsmanship to be as expert as always, but the achievement of the film, an adaptation of the spectacular musical play, was limited from the beginning. *Red Ensign* has the virtue of being based on an original story. Handled with a sense of the theme's importance, the film might have told impressively the story of British shipbuilding, but Gaumont-British, ignoring the real-life drama of the delayed Cunarder on the Clyde, have been content to use the shipyards as a mere background for a rapid melodrama. Similarly, *The Song of the Plough*, though it sets its drama in the English countryside and takes some notice of the contemporary economic situation, is treated so ineptly that it fails to come alive. We are still no nearer to undertaking the task of "telling the rest of the world the truth about Britain"—a shortcoming about which Eric Knight so properly protested in his "Synthetic America."

Accomplishment in this connection is still limited to the shorter documentaries; but the effect of these is not to be written-off as negligible. The remarkable popularity of the films produced by the E.M.B. Film Unit is beginning to alter the outlook of the commercial producer to documentary. Those earlier films, at present being exhibited throughout the country, include *Industrial Britain*, by Grierson and Flaherty, which, in a series of intelligently conceived and expressively photographed sequences, convincingly argues that behind the smoke and the steam of modern industry there is always the craftsman, and that Britain's industrial supremacy is built up on a centuries-old tradition of craftsmanship. Two films by Basil Wright, *The Country Comes to Town* and *O'er Hill and Dale*, have the lyrical quality that has been apparent in all of Wright's work. The latter gives a simple, clear-cut impression of the meaning of Spring to the shepherd—the anxieties, the dangers, the rewards. In this film Wright has caught, with an effectiveness only a Scotsman can appreciate, the peculiar atmosphere of the cold, grey, empty uplands of Southern Scotland. Also among the E.M.B. documentaries now being generally exhibited is Arthur Elton's *Upstream*, an illuminating impression of the salmon trek from the sea to the breeding-grounds. Here Elton, forestalling Pudovkin, makes effective use of the close-up in time, grading the leaping salmon in various degrees of slow motion and thus securing some curious and interesting emphases. These films, at least, have begun the task of showing Britain on the screen. Their success will surely persuade the producers that modern London can be as interesting on the screen as Old Vienna, and that there is no need to go to the ends of the earth when drama is waiting on the doorstep.

The quarter is more interesting if not more distinctive for *Thunder Over Mexico*. Paul Rotha discusses two important aspects of the film's exhibition. For the rest, it may be recorded that the film as we see it is little more than a Mexican Bad Man tale of the rape of one girl and the execution of three peons, with a prologue and epilogue scrappily descriptive of the emergence of a new Mexico. Without the control of the mind originally conceiving the theme, the film has neither coherence nor conviction. The style, too, is impossible to associate with the director of *Potemkin*.

America's films of the quarter are odd in their variety. They include *Little Women*, which has been welcomed as "a complete joy" by one critic who thinks it "simple [and] sincere to the spirit of a gorgeously sentimental race." The film certainly reproduces, to the last sniff, the last sob, every drop of the sentimentality which has made the novel an established best-seller. In complete contrast is the advanced sophistication of Lubitsch's *Design for Living*. It is hard to find a common strain also in two such films as *Alice in Won-*

derland and *The Bowery*. The first is an efficient but pedestrian adaptation of a fantastic theme calling for imagination and resource to be effective on the screen; the second is a broad comedy of life in the Bowery towards the end of last century, a completely a-moral concoction of sadism and sentiment. Meanwhile, the stream of musical films from Hollywood continues unabated with *The Cat and the Fiddle*, *Wonder Bar* and *Roman Scandals* on the crest of an on-coming wave.

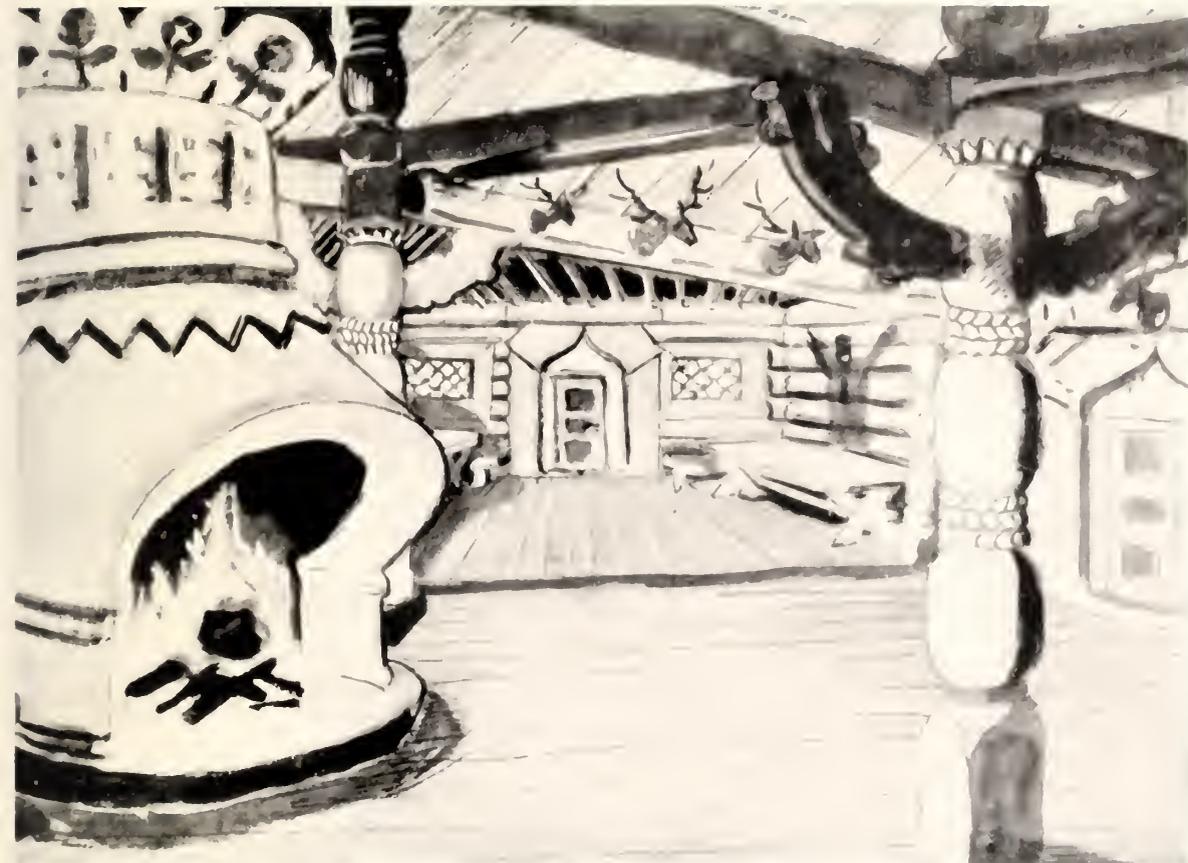
THUNDER OVER MEXICO

Production: Upton Sinclair and friends. Photography: Edouard Tissé. Assembling: Sol Lesser. Music: Hugo Riesenfeld. Distribution: Zenifilms. Length: 6690 feet.

THE STORM over Eisenstein and Sinclair and their joint Mexican catastrophe has by now almost blown itself out, and I do not intend to continue the argument for either side when so much has already been printed by people more familiar with the actual facts than myself. Some day, I suppose, someone will divulge the whole story. Meanwhile, I cordially commend you to Ivor Montagu's summing-up of the case in "The New Statesman" (Jan. 20). It remains only for us to condole with Upton Sinclair for the immense sum of money (not his friends', I hope) he must be spending in writing letters in defence of himself; with Eisenstein for the rôle of martyr imposed upon his shaggy head by his youthful well-wishers; and with ourselves for not seeing what might have been a film among films.

You will agree that no useful purpose can be served in criticising what appears on the English and American screens as Eisenstein's picture, for its traveloguesque cutting by Lesser and its synthetic music by Riesenfeld make the sugary images dull going. Only two results of the picture's showing need concern us here. One, that Eisenstein's name should be dragged in the slime of American showmanship before a public unacquainted with the facts; and two, that heavy filtered skies can get the critics twittering as only critics can.

Can nothing be done to prevent the advertisement of a director's name in connection with a picture when he has withdrawn his hand? There is surely urgent need of a protection committee for directors who have fallen foul of their producers and who wish to withdraw all responsibility for the film put before the public as their own. Such are the conditions of film-making to-day that every important director would subscribe. It should be made possible in such a case as *Thunder Over Mexico* for Eisenstein to have caused Sinclair



Above. One of the sketches prepared by Vincent Korda for the settings of "Catherine the Great."

Below. A corresponding still from the film, taken from the opposite side—showing the accurate reproduction of the design. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. is standing by the open fire and Gerald du Maurier beside one of the pillars.



Greta Garbo in "Queen Christina," a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production directed by Rouben Mamoulian from the scenario by Salka Viertel and H. M. Harwood. The photography is by William Daniels.



to remove his name from the picture before it was given a public showing. The Soviet is not alone in this misfortune. I know of several directors—Pabst, Vidor and Stroheim among them—who would have had their credit withdrawn from certain pictures owing to interference either during shooting or editing. As it is, many have heard of Eisenstein as the maker of *Potemkin* and will view this Mexican travesty with astonished eyes.

My second point raises the old issue of what constitutes good photography. From the eulogistic press we gather that white clouds in a dark sky are the hallmark of quality, and it would appear that this sort of stuff can lead the critics into believing that they are also seeing good film. You will remember that the same thing occurred with *The Blue Light*. Now, if they like this sort of stuff why don't they tell us about Herbert's Movietone series, amongst which the Irish item has Tissé's over-correction beaten to a frazzle. They forget, moreover, as Grierson has pointed out, that Eisenstein's films have not previously been notable for their great photography, but rather for the referential treatment which he employs in his cutting. They forget, also, that almost any photographer given the same set of Wrattens, the same conditions and the same locations, could produce equally sweet images. So an end to this photographic fetish and let them get down to the essentials of movie-making which were not to be found in Lesser-Sinclair's free gift to the art of the cinema.

PAUL ROTH.

QUEEN CHRISTINA

Production and Distribution: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Scenario: Salka Viertel and H. M. Harwood. Direction: Rouben Mamoulian. Photography: William Daniels. Editing: Blanche Sewell. With Greta Garbo, Lewis Stone, John Gilbert. Length: 9047 feet.

I do not find it in me to write about this picture, for it would be too cruel, but I must write instead of Garbo, who contrives, though Heaven knows how, to surpass all the badness they thrust upon her. Of her many American pictures, all without exception have been trash; yet this astonishing woman surmounts the very crudity with which they choose to surround her. Here, a lithe figure sheathed in men's breeches and stamping boots, she strides into our presence and again reveals her dynamic personal magnetism. She is a woman, it seems, destined to continue in a world that spells misunderstanding. No director who has tried to harness these grave features to his will has yet been able to create a film which brings us the woman as she is. *Queen Christina* perhaps comes nearest; with its great close-ups

and sublime fading shot. But the showman tricks of Mamoulian and the base falseness of the environment conspire against her. Before it is too late, before the synthetic background against which she moves makes final reckoning, may she, like this old-time Queen of Sweden, set her back to the call of glamour and give herself just once into the hands of a mind which may try to understand her, so that such a film above all others may be preserved for posterity. That this imagined picture will find its shape in Europe I have no doubt, because it is against the whole American conception that Garbo battles.

PAUL ROTH.

CATHERINE THE GREAT

Production: London Films. Supervision: Alexander Korda. Direction: Paul Czinner. Scenario: Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis. Photography: Georges Périnal. Settings: Vincent Korda. Costumes: John Armstrong. With Elisabeth Bergner, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Flora Robson, Gerald du Maurier. Distribution: United Artists. Length: 8650 feet.

FORGET your social and historical conscience and you will find the new Korda picture amusing diversion punctuated with moments of drama. It is polished; it is artificial; and it is theatrical in treatment. But if you are tolerantly disposed towards romantic costume pictures, the insignificance of all this pomp and petulance will not arise to disturb your entertainment.

Closer inspection reveals much to praise and not a little to criticise. Let us be pleasant first: about the settings of the film, which in all ways mark such an advance on the customary British setting that I may be too enthusiastic. But these sets depicting the Imperial Palace have a dignity and a regal lavishness quite different from the property-room bazaars which usually do service for movie royal magnificence. And the clothes. Armstrong has excelled in his designing, becoming decorative yet remaining practical (no easy task), notably in the case of young Fairbanks and Flora Robson. True, the court loungers stand about as if at a fancy-dress party, but that is Czinner's and not Armstrong's fault. Périnal also has maintained a pretty focus, weak in patches where the set-ups mean nothing to the content; but perhaps that also is the fault of the director.

I found Elisabeth Bergner curiously disappointing, in some way unable to grasp the drama within the scene and interpret it for us. Despite my admiration for her brilliant ability, I am doubtful if she was cast correctly. The younger Fairbanks, labouring under

a bad make-up, begins well, but fails to remain impressive, his madness having no inspiration save storming and his quieter moods being too superficial to impress. Flora Robson I liked best of all. She carried conviction and behaved credibly. She perhaps failed to give full meaning to her lines; but then the dialogue throughout is trashy. People, either ancient or modern, do not express themselves in the tit-bits style which has been adapted in these pseudo-historical pictures.

The direction, attributed to Czinner under the supervision of Korda, I have purposely left till last because it is the most difficult to assess. It looks as if Bergner, Fairbanks and the others have been given their heads, and the camera adjusted to them. There is little attempt to create any of the situations cinematically, to get underneath the skin of the dramatic incidents and present them through the camera. The picture's appeal rests upon its physical good looks and, from this point of view, almost succeeds. But you will know better than to expect some re-creation of the spirit of Russia in the eighteenth century, of the famine that stalked the land or the intolerant tyranny that held the reins.

PAUL ROTH.

MALA THE MAGNIFICENT

Production and Distribution: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Direction: W. S. Van Dyke. Photography: Clyde de Vinna and others. Length: 9650 feet.

THIS EPIC of the Arctic pre-dates Flaherty's *Nanook* by about ten years and should have been put before the public just before the War. Actually, of course, it is M.G.M.'s successor to *Trader Horn*, and follows in the same path of exploiting the naturalistic tradition for the sake of box-office. Arctic conditions, however, could not have been so inviting to Van Dyke as that pleasant camp at the foot of the Murchison Falls, and I am not surprised that so much of the picture bears signs of Culver City. It would seem that the formula for these pictures is murder—whether of man or beast—for only by killing can Van Dyke produce the necessary thrilling scenes for M.G.M. to sponsor the outfit. I do not remember how many animals were slain in *Mala* to secure the right effect of thrill on the audience, but the number includes walrus, polar bear, caribou—and fish. The deliberation with which this is presented is nauseating and is not excused by the fact that primitive peoples kill to eat. So also do we, but our films are not filled with slaughter-houses. Technically the film is insignificant, with photography that increases our respect for *Nanook*, and a use of native dialogue that

is cumbersome and unnecessary. The Esquimo heroine, I am told on good authority, comes from some South American dive. Yet, though I hate to confess it, *Mala* is better than the usual run of adapted plays.

PAUL ROTH.

DESIGN FOR LIVING. (*American. Paramount.*) As dramatic critics who write about films have pointed out, presumably in condemnation, Lubitsch has not made a photograph of Noel Coward's play. He has shaped the theme afresh for the screen, clipped from it its moral theorising and tailor-made it for his players—Miriam Hopkins, Frederic March, Gary Cooper and Edward Everett Horton—just as Coward, on his own confession, tailor-made the play for Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne and himself. It is pleasant, slick, superficial farce, without any introspection. The imposing title, as Ivor Brown has remarked, has been given to “a little comedy about the amorous manœuvres of two trivial men and one trivial woman,” and *Design for Loving* would have been more appropriate for a film describing the predicament of a young woman in love with two men at the same time, and the “gentleman's agreement,” precluding sex, under which they contract to live together in a Paris apartment. As always, Lubitsch handles his players with skill and sympathy, though Gary Cooper seems somewhat out of his element. Lubitsch is one of the few directors who have succeeded consistently in leaving their films with the imprint of a single dominating personality. *Design for Living* is in the true Lubitsch tradition, and I think it his most satisfying sound film.

F. H.

||| WHITHER GERMANY? (*British. B. and N.*) Typical of a current tendency to survey conditions in Europe by means of news-reel extracts is this short film which describes the trend of events in Germany since pre-War times. Its purpose is to awaken consciousness of the direction those events are taking and, though the commentary is restrained, it is plain that the film has been made with the conviction that Nazi Germany is moving towards war. The opening sequences emphasise the nation's love of pageantry, represented in carnivals and folk-dances, and it is suggested that this can find more sinister outlet in displays of militarism. The film maintains the belief that militarism was the cause of the War, and after brief sequences dealing with post-War conditions in a depressed and defeated country, troops again dominate the screen. A parallel is drawn between the goose-stepping troops who marched past the Kaiser and the Nazi troops who march in similar fashion past Hitler to-day. Here the film's conviction is most obviously apparent.

The closing shots pointedly contrast a sports ground crowded with young men exercising, and a graveyard patterned with small white crosses. Composed as it is of actual material, the film has a certain educative value, but the bias in the selection of the sequences must be remembered.

F. H.

ANNA UND ELISABETH. (*German. Kollektiv.*) This is primarily an acting film and does not enlarge our experience of cinema. It is unfolded slowly and deliberately with great emphasis of detail, but like so many German films it is inclined to meander before arriving at the point. The story describes the relations of two women, one a wealthy but crippled recluse and the other a peasant girl, credited by the villagers with the power of working miracles. No matter how much the Germans leave their studios and get out into the open air, they still retain their studio mind. That is the great fault of this picture. Frank Wysbar could learn a great deal from Duvivier. Dorothea Wieck's Elisabeth and Hertha Thiele's Anna are the two main interests of acting. You will remember both of them in *Madchen in Uniform*. The former, now with Paramount in Hollywood, shows a considerable power of emotion, but is inclined to give way to mannerisms which become irritating. Hertha Thiele, on the other hand, plays less sensationally and more capably. In addition, Mathias Wieman's consumptive is a restrained and wholly admirable performance.

P. R.

DUCK SOUP. (*American. Paramount.*) A new director, Leo McCarey, has effected a subtle change in the Marx tradition. Previously the wildness of the Brothers has lacked the wild logic that would have given it purpose and removed from the film the impression of loose and haphazard construction. In *Duck Soup*, McCarey appears to have exercised a greater influence, both over the composing of the scenario and the performance of the Brothers. This has had two results: the picture has direction and a sense of purpose; and the Brothers, their madness hampered somewhat by a method, have not always the spontaneity we expect. But if the latter is regrettable, the former is more than sufficient compensation. The setting is Ruritania, and there is some glorious burlesque of pomp and pageantry, of Cabinet meetings and political receptions, of a State trial and of modern warfare: and, as always, of conventional etiquette, for the Marx Brothers are the supreme anarchists of the screen. One incidental sequence of slapstick in which Harpo smashes a mirror and then appears opposite Groucho as his reflection, is the funniest thing in any Marx film since *The Cocoanuts*.

F. H.

GUIDE TO FILM-GOING

EVERYWOMAN'S MAN (*American. M.G.M.*). Grierson once wrote that "there are good fight-films and fight-films not so good, but none bad." This is of the former, a fight-film of giants, rapid and exciting. W. S. Van Dyke directed from the fool-proof script of Frances Marion.

FOUR FRIGHTENED PEOPLE. (*American. Paramount.*) Cecil de Mille sacrifices all claims to intelligence as a director with this idiotic adaptation of Arnot Robertson's novel.

GOLDEN HARVEST (*American. Paramount.*) An attempt to introduce contemporary economic problems and settings into story films, this picture of the wheat-belt and the Chicago wheat-pit is well ahead of the ordinary run. People do strange things in an improbable manner, but it is worth seeing.

THE INVISIBLE MAN (*American. Universal.*) This lively interpretation of the Wells fantasy would have been more forceful and successful if there had been a completely realistic background for the study of the exuberant sense of freedom and escape enjoyed by a man unencumbered by a body. Gross overacting and the ponderous love story weaken the effect. Interesting chiefly for its astonishing technical ingenuity.

LIEBELEI (*German.*) An adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's romantic tragedy, describing the effects of the subordination of human feelings to rigid standards of social honour. Delicate in treatment, beautifully acted, cold and formal in mood. Max Ophuls directed.

THE MASCOT (*French. H. Rose.*) With immense patience and fine artistry, M. Starevitch and his wife have succeeded in making children's toys and the animated contents of a garbage tin as expressive as many a Hollywood puppet. It is a child's dream, but the macabre atmosphere and grotesque fantasy border on nightmare. Indifferent editing has not helped an occasionally obscure story.

UN MONASTERE (*French. Film Society.*) An intimate impression of the life of a Trappist monk, by Robert Alexandre, director of *The Polish Corridor*. Effectively photographed and skilfully edited, the film shows not only the ordinary routine of the monastery, but such intimate scenes as a funeral service and a communion rite. Sombre but not unimpressive.

NIGHT FLIGHT (*American. M.G.M.*) A melodrama of the South American night mail; a clumsy patchwork of fine aerial shots by Elmer Dyer and Charles Marshall—studio reconstructions of airport interiors, plentiful Dunning, and episodic "human" incidents. Scenes of radio communication between ground and air are effective.

L'ORDONNANCE (*French.*) Tourjanski is heavy-handed and uses excess footage to put across his points, but the film, adapted from a de Maupassant story, is better than most recent Continental imports. Watch for the opening and the ending: they are economically shot. But you will go away with the impression that Tourjanski is more of a theatre showman than a movie director.

LE PETIT ROI (*French.*) Julien Duvivier has directed this Ruritanian tale realistically and without comic purpose, and there is a carefully contrived background for a compelling performance by Robert Lynen as a boy king who prefers mud-larking at Monte Carlo to kingship in a mist-bound mediaeval castle. The photography has a fine atmospheric quality.

● AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT regarding the booking of films by film societies and other organisations will be found on page 199.

FILM SOCIETIES

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY

THE Tyneside Film Society had its beginnings at a small public meeting held in Newcastle in December 1932, and after fourteen months, during which the committee experienced a series of reverses, January 1934 finally saw the committee in a position to report that the major obstacles had been overcome. The Newcastle Watch Committee has issued licences for private Sunday performances, and it may perhaps be stated for the information of those experiencing difficulty in securing similar licences that the negotiations were placed in the hands of an experienced solicitor and a memorandum was distributed to members of the Licensing Committee setting out the aims of the Society, the case for the Society, proposed programmes, and relevant extracts from the Constitution.

The membership was 450 at the end of February. The subscription for the session 1933-4 is 6s., and a comprehensive programme has been organised. Of the three private exhibitions arranged, two have so far been held; the films which have been shown include *The New Generation*, *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, *King's English*, *Der Traumende Mund*, *In der Nacht*, and *Country Comes to Town*. Other items on the Society's programme are two private exhibitions of silent documentary and entertainment films for children, a public film exhibition for children arranged in conjunction with the Modern Languages Association (the programme will include *A Nous la Liberté*), a public exhibition of stills from British and foreign films of outstanding merit or interest, displays of amateur 16-mm. films, joint meetings with local dramatic and other societies, and lectures on film appreciation and the technique of production. The Society has formed a strong link with Montagu Amateur Pictures, an amateur Newcastle film-producing body which has won international and national awards, and A. G. Greaves, A.R.P.S., its chairman, has joined the committee. Arrangements have been made for a Saturday afternoon excursion with Montagu Pictures during the production of its next film; the committee feels that its objects are served as much by stressing the technical side of film production as by merely exhibiting films of distinction.

As the objects of the Society include the exertion of some influence where possible on the character of programmes in local cinemas, a proposal to issue a regular commentary on local films has received

consideration. In the meantime the Chairman of the Society, Ernest Dyer, B.A., has been appointed regular film critic of Tyne-side's most influential newspaper, the "Newcastle Evening Chronicle," and has been given an entirely free hand.

The Hon. Secretary of this new and energetic body is M. C. Pottinger, c/o The Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. 14th Jan. *Paris Markets. Tonende Handschrift. Un Monastère. The Table of the Poor.* (All Film Soc.) 11th Feb. *Gathering Moss* (B.I.F.). Reiniger's *Carmen* (Film Soc.). *Reifende Jugend* (Film Soc.). 11th Mar. Complete version of Eisenstein's *October* (Film Soc.).

BILLINGHAM FILM SOCIETY, Hon. Sec. J. R. Park, 26 Redwing Lane, Norton. Performances of films similar to those given by other societies are held at a local picturehouse on Wednesday evenings. There is no formal membership, anyone being able to attend by buying a ticket at the box-office.

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. S. G. Hawes, 163 Pershore Road, Birmingham. 14th Jan. *Loves of Zero* (Film Soc.). *Thunder, Lightning and Rain. The Fourteenth of July* (Film Soc.). 11th Feb. *Prague* (Film Soc.). *Synthetic Sound Tracks* (Film Soc.). Zuts' *Cartoon* (Film Soc.). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). 11th Mar. *Springtime at the Zoo* (B.I.F.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *La Maternelle* (Film Soc.).

CHESHIRE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Diana Baerlin, Whatcroft Hall, Northwich. 4th Jan. *Steel* (G.-B. Dis.). *Les Mains* (Film Soc.). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). 15th Feb. *Vienna the Wonderful*. Disney's *Just Dogs* (G.-B. Dis.). *Madchen in Uniform* (Nat. Dis.). 15th Mar. *The Mystery Ship*. Disney's *The Fire Fighters* (G.-B. Dis.). *Rasputin*.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. G. R. Bailey, 56 High Street, Croydon. 21st Jan. *The Eternal Triangle* (primitive). Reiniger's *Cinderella* (Film Soc.). *Turksib* (Arcos). *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. 25th Feb. *Berlin* (Wardour). *A Nous la Liberté* (Universal). 18th Mar. *Romance in a Pond* (B.I.F.). *Finding His Voice* (West. Electric). *Contact* (Wardour). Fischinger's *Hungarian Dances* (Filmophone). *Potemkin* (Arcos).

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 South St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh. 7th Jan. *Uberfall* (Film Soc.). *O'er Hill and Dale* (G.-B. Dis.). Disney's *Egyptian Melodies* (G.-B. Dis.). *Der Traumende Mund* (Film Soc.). 11th Feb. *Kamet Conquered* (Gifford). Disney's *Fox Hunt* (G.-B. Dis.). *The Virtuous Isidore* (Film Soc.).

On 20th Feb. a sub-standard performance included *The Wonderful Lie* (Pathe-scope), *All on a Summer's Day* and *Hair*, made by the Meteor Society, and a film of the Borders by Alan Harper. 18th-24th Mar. premier show of Jenny Brown's Shetland film *The Rugged Island*.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW. Hon. Sec. D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street. 14th Jan. *Making the Feather Wait*, *Ideal Cinemagazine* (G.-B. Dis.). *Canal Barge* (Film Soc.). *Sound Track Patterns* (Film Soc.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 4th Feb. *Screen Snapshot* (Columbia). *Mountain Music* (First National). *Granton Trawler* (G.P.O.). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.). 25th Feb. Zuts' *Cartoon* (Film Soc.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *O'er Hill and Dale* (G.-B. Dis.). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.). 11th Mar. Pudovkin's *Deserter* (Film Soc.). *Barbarina* (Beacon).

Lectures have been given by C. A. Oakley on "The American Film," and J. C. Elder on "Educational Films." Sub-standard films shown have included *Hungarian Rhapsody*, *Moana*, and *The Covered Wagon*.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College Leicester. 20th Jan. Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Spione Am Werk* (Wardour). 17th Feb. *Granton Trawler* (G.P.O.). *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos).

Two performances have been held in conjunction with the Vaughan College Students' Union. 13th Jan. *The Story of a Glass of Water* (B.I.F.). Elton's *Aero Engine* (G.P.O.). *The Life of the Bean* (B.I.F.). *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* (Universal). 3rd Feb. *M* (Nat. Dis.), etc. Members of the Society are able to attend a series of ten University Extension lectures, being given by John Grierson, on "The Art of the Cinema."

MAIDSTONE FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Miss G. M. Nicholson, Fowden Hall, London Road, Maidstone. 21st Jan. *Don Quixote* (United Artists). *A Nous la Liberté* (Universal). 18th Feb. *We Take off our Hats* (Wardour). *Don Dougio Farabanca* (Asfi). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.).

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 86 Hulton Street, Salford. 20th Jan. *In der Nacht* (Film Soc.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 24th Feb. *The Crazy Ray*. *War is Hell* (W. P. Films). 24th Mar. *Zuyderzeewerks* (Film Soc.). *The Mighty World*. *The General Line* (Arcos).

NORTHWICH FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. W. Baldwin Fletcher, I.C.I. (Alkali) Ltd., Northwich. 3rd Jan. *Oh, What a Night*. *Madchen in Uniform* (Nat. Dis.). *Drifters* (New Era). 7th Feb. *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). 17th Jan. *Gaumont Sound Mirror*. *The Telephone Service* (G.P.O.). *Tabu* (Paramount). Disney's *Barnyard Broadcast* (G.-B. Dis.). Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Ninety Degrees South*. 14th Mar. *Brock the Badger* (B.I.F.). *Symphony of the Streets* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Night* (G.-B. Dis.). *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.).

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY. Hon. Sec. Mrs. Hilda Harrison, Sandlands, Boars Hill, Oxford. 7th Jan. *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Whoopee Party* (G.-B. Dis.). *Joan of Arc*. 21st Jan. *The Aphis* (B.I.F.). *Lichtertanz* (Film Soc.). Disney's *Bears and Bees* (United Artists). *The General Line* (Arcos). 11th Feb. *Cotton Growing* (B.I.F.). Reiniger's *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Uberfall* (Film Soc.). *En Natt* (Film Soc.). 25th Feb. *Gathering Moss* (B.I.F.). *Touchdown Mickey* (G.-B. Dis.). *Magician's Apprentice*. *Heart of an Indian Maid*. Disney's *King Neptune* (United Artists). *Un Soir de Rafle*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. Zut's Cartoon (Film Soc.). Pudovkin's *Deserter* (Film Soc.). 4th Feb. *Power* (Zenifilms). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). Mickey's *Mellerdramer* (United Artists). *Hunted People* (Film Soc.). 18th Feb. *The Toymaker's Dream* (a 1900 cartoon and puppet film). *Great Line Fishing* (G.P.O.). Schufftan Process Film (Process Productions). Disney's *Fox Hunt* (G.-B. Dis.). *La Maternelle* (Film Soc.). 4th Mar. *King's English* (B.I.F.). *King Neptune* (United Artists), Ideal Cinemagazine (G.-B. Dis.). Disney's *Autumn* (G.-B. Dis.). *Joyless Street*.

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY. 21st Jan.. *Eyes of Science*. *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Frollicking Fish* (G.-B. Dis.). *Der Hauptmann von Koepenick* (Film Soc.). 4th Feb. *The Changing Year* (Pathé). *Building a Building* (United Artists). *The Fourteenth of July* (Film Soc.). 18th Feb. *Brumes D'Automne* (Film Soc.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *The Road to Life* (Arcos). 4th Mar. *Mor-Fran* (Film Soc.). *Le Loup Garou* (W. & P.). *Birds in Spring* (United Artists).

SOUTH WALES FILM SOCIETY. This new body hopes to arrange performances and lectures on the lines of other societies, and also to give sub-standard exhibitions in country villages. The Hon. Sec. is D. Evans, Llwyn Onn, Masons Road, Gorseinon, Glam.

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PRODUCTION FOR AMATEURS

CHOOSING A SUBJECT

ANDREW BUCHANAN

SOMETIMES brilliant technicians select the most unsuitable subjects for their productions, and, quite naturally, there are others who possess a genius for selecting good subjects, but are unable to produce them adequately. So much depends upon the individual and his circumstances that no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down on this most difficult and fundamental matter.

However, the first advice I would give is to remember your medium and its demand for Movement. Secondly, that Movement is created both by the action taking place in shots, and also by the relation of a series of shots, one to the other. By the latter method, a number of shots of static images can be given movement by the skill of the cutter. Perhaps it seems elementary to ask an enthusiastic student of the film to remember Movement, but it is surprising how it is lost sight of when one is engrossed in filming a subject and encounters, at every turn, something unexpected, that is irresistible but totally unnecessary, which will probably upset one's cutting plans.

The documentary film is of primary importance, but one must arrive at that conclusion by logical reasoning and experience. Otherwise, to be filled at the outset with an intense desire to make documentaries means that one will probably copy characteristics of those who have succeeded, and consequently the individuality of the producer will fail to express itself fully, through having been preoccupied in striving to live up to certain standards set by others. Also, please eliminate from the mind the word "raw." Avoid "raw material," and "life in the raw." It is inclined to be boring—and inaccurate. Substitute the word "natural" for "raw."

Preliminaries over, I would urge the producer to plan his early subjects so that they are composed chiefly of exteriors. If his ambition extends to portraying fictional drama, make the setting in the open air, as far as possible.

Next, I suggest to him to give his camera away for at least two weeks, because his first job is to plan and produce his subject in his mind, and the camera fills one with impatience to start shooting. I would like to see him begin by making a film of the city, town, or village in which he resides, and, however well he knows the neigh-

bourhood, he will, or should, find it quite a different place when he approaches it with a view to portraying it on the screen. Instead of rushing out and filming the High Street, the Curiosity Shop on the corner, and shooting that dreadful pan from the weathercock on top of the steeple to the porch of the church, let him consider, perhaps for the first time, what it is that creates a certain character—atmosphere—about the place. Why is Swindon so different from Canterbury? Birmingham from Torquay? There is something more than sea or no sea, trains or cathedrals. The characters of the residents reflect that something; the shops, and the things they sell. That “something” must be captured, and that is why I suggested the camera should be locked away for two weeks, until the producer has discovered what it is, and how to portray it. If the atmosphere of the past pervades the place, pictorial reference must be made to it. Why do those craft-workers, in the narrow street under the shadow of the cathedral, fit in so perfectly there. How out of place they would seem spinning next to vast engine sheds. Imagine rows and rows and rows of tiny depressing houses running past the walls of the cathedral. They “don’t belong.” Unfortunately, they are in their rightful place, framing vast locomotive shops. Watch the faces of workers in the one town, and the other. Estimate the different *tempo* of living. In one street a horse dozes. In another it would cause chaotic traffic blocks. What dominates or influences life in Torquay that is so different from Birmingham? Holidays and work? Something more than that.

Along such lines I would plan the scenario in my mind. Certainly I should film the High Street and the crooked cottages, but only if they were real contributions to the story—if they built up the character—atmosphere—soul, call it what you will, of the place. Go to Wales and feel the effect of the valleys; to Scotland and experience the stillness in the Highlands. Those who live there are used to such things, but unconsciously they reflect the spirit of the localities in a hundred ways which the camera can capture: the slowness of their walk; beards; bent shoulders; facial expressions; how they earn their livings—all are governed by their surroundings, and the screen can vividly show this to be so. But is that kind of thing enough? Is not a central theme a necessity? I believe the individual can best answer that question, but, personally, I feel a theme is essential, thereby closely linking the documentary to the fictional film. In Wright’s excellent *The Country Comes to Town* the inter-relation of town and country is extremely fine, and consolidates the whole film. The ending is brilliant. Crowds of city clerks hurry over London’s bridges to work. The scene dissolves into long shots of fields and downs, and the commentary asks you to remember, every time you watch city crowds, to see just beyond them the

country-side, upon which they depend for their health, and how the sun and the fresh air and the pasture lands are brought to them in dairy produce every morning. Here is another idea. If one lives in London, make a subject of Edgware Road, from Marble Arch to the old village of Edgware. The changes in character from W1 to 2; from towering flats to narrow thoroughfares; extensive stores to crowded stalls; and so on, to widening roads flanked by automobile factories; and still on, until rural surroundings gradually creep in. I mention this as the story is ready-made, and all the technical resources of the cameraman will be brought into play.

In conclusion, I would implore the producer to be as natural as his material should be, and avoid being clever. Please do not shoot telegraph poles sideways without a reason—if there could be one. Fight against the desire to film that colossal power station merely because you can obtain marvellous shots of the chimneys. Film the power station because you want to relate its wonderful work. Shoot a telephone normally. If you show it upside down, you must know why. People who introduce unusual angles to emphasise particular points, sometimes know what they are doing, and one enthuses over their originality. But it is so terribly easy to shoot things like that without knowing why. If you are filming Winchester, remember it is quite a long walk from Moscow, and that the brilliant characterisation in many Russian films would be totally wrong if applied to your story. I believe in studying the work of every producer everywhere, and then going away and doing what I think is correct, but if I felt I was merely copying what I have seen, I would throw my efforts into the bin.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

RUDOLF ARNHEIM. Author of "Film." Now engaged on the International Encyclopædia of Cinematography.

ANDREW BUCHANAN. Producer of the *Gaumont-British Magazine*, formerly known as *Ideal Cinemazine*. Author of "Films: the Way of the Cinema," and several novels.

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI. Director of *En Rade* and *Rien que les Heures*.

ERIC ELLIOTT. Author of "Anatomy of Motion Picture Art."

JOHN GRIERSON. G.P.O. Films producer. His *Industrial Britain* is at present being widely shown throughout the country.

STUART LEGG. Director of *The New Generation*. One of the G.P.O. Film Unit.

HUGH MACDIARMID. Author of "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle," "Lenin," etc. His new volume of poems "Stony Limits," will shortly be published by Gollancz.

MACK W. SCHWAB. Hollywood film critic.

TWO FILMS by W. H. GEORGE

THESE TWO 16 mm. sub-standard films, designed for use in the classroom, are simple and unambitious, and, in this respect, contain lessons for all amateur film-makers. *Clouds and Rain* begins with a laboratory creation of clouds. It then goes out into the country to describe types of cloud and the weather they create. The angles have been chosen with imagination, though occasionally there is unnecessary over-emphasis of angle. The exteriors are distinguished by some of the loveliest photography yet seen on 16 mm. Filtering has been used skilfully to bring out the different types of clouds. In *The Outer Isles*, George used filters excessively, and although he obtained lovely cloud effects (justified in *Clouds and Rain*), he lost the action he was shooting on the ground.

Nevertheless these two films are noteworthy for their choice of subject and their technique. After painful experiences of many early efforts by amateurs, these films appear to be the product of real thought. They are both available from the G.P.O. film library.

D. F. TAYLOR.

GLASGOW INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS GROUP, which has already a membership of fifteen, intends to start production immediately on a film of a documentary and experimental nature. Membership of the Group will be limited to twenty-five. The Hon. Sec. is D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

STUDIO accommodation is a difficult problem with most amateurs. The Brondesbury Cine Society, however, is fortunate in having premises of some 1400 square feet, with a lighting equipment of nearly 25 kilowatts, which is available by special arrangement for individual workers. Full particulars may be had from A. D. Frischmann, 27 Mincing Lane, London, E.C.3. The Brondesbury Cine Society, though mainly interested in film play production, has a small circle of keen experimental workers.

● FILM BOOKS WANTED.—*Film Till Now. Anatomy of Motion Picture Art.* All standard works. Abbey Book Shop, 3 South Street, St Andrews, where all books reviewed in *Cinema Quarterly* may be purchased.

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CINEMA QUARTERLY

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THE SPECTATOR

WHERE ARE WE GOING ?

SOONER OR LATER the finer significances of cinema art and purpose must be resolved and their true relationships established. Meanwhile all of us, critics and craftsmen alike, talk glibly of evolving technique without any clear idea of what we want to do with cinema, what we want to make it say once we know how. All the talk of film being still in its infancy is so much nonsense—a cowardly deceit to cover our wretched incompetence. Young in years the cinema may be, but it has already achieved ample maturity, with everything needful to produce the dreamed-of masterpieces. But where are they ?

What excuse can we offer for their absence ? The trade . . . the moguls of the box-office . . . the cost of production . . . censorship. Effete aesthetes may vent their imprecations in a wild hysteria, but they are as far from the truth as they are from practicalities. Nor need the producers blame the public, who may refuse but never demand. Reformers may rant and rave, but the masses, by and large, like their pleasures highly spiced. And when an august Governor of the British Film Institute believes it to be “not a bad thing” that the passions and emotions “thus find an outlet vicariously”—why should the trade worry ?

The film industry lives up to its name, of which it has no reason to be either proud or ashamed. It exists to make money, as much as possible in the soonest possible time. It deceives nobody on this score, least of all itself. But while as a business proposition it may employ artists it has little concern with the production of art as a medium of expressions. Its use for art is to sell more and more miles of celluloid. And if it is not the art you want, says the trade, it sells our films and we pay plenty for it. Thus the principal object of censure casts the blame elsewhere.

And so the guilty game of pitch and toss goes on. Let us put an end to it forthwith. Let us be honest with ourselves and admit

the guilt. For it is we who are to blame. We—the craftsmen, the workers, the so-called artists, the creators of cinema. And we—the critics, the guiders, the moulders of taste. We between us must stand condemned, for not only are we getting nowhere—we have not yet made up our minds where we want to go. Other people may stand in our way and oppose, but the urge to progress must be within ourselves.

First of all we must make up our minds as to whether there can be any ultimate or even opportunate reconciliation between the dictates of art and the aims of commercialism. Can the film become a genuine collective art instead of a battle of divergent ideas and conflicting personalities? Or must the individual assert himself and by the power of his own creative impulse achieve an artistic unity out of elements which now oppose each other?

Is it the critic's function merely to surface comment on the meaningless confectionery of films which do no more than titilate the senses? Or is he to expose the shams and attack the fundamental weaknesses of a medium which ought to be capable of moving the mind and stirring the emotions of mankind?

How many films during the past year have attempted to say anything, laudable or otherwise? And how many films of thematic imbecility have been praised exorbitantly for their superficial elegance? It may be no part of the critic's task to tell the artist what he ought to do, but as well as stimulating the appreciation and enlarging the comprehension of the spectator, the critic's evaluation, if a considered judgment of synthesis and comparison, can have a salutary effect on the sources of creation. Temperamental camera-work, counterpoint sound, dynamic cutting—all mean nothing if what they say is not worth saying.

Under the present system of production, which hands out theme and scenario with little or no option, the director who wishes to retain his self-respect feels justified in repudiating all claims of an artist's responsibility in conception. Few, however, are prepared to surrender any part of the credit in a film's success. Yet, apart from Pabst, how many of the much lauded ace directors have had the courage to demand conditions of work which would allow them freedom of expression? If they were as big as their reputations they could command their own terms. But they are afraid. Not of the studio chiefs or their corporate employers—but of themselves. Given freedom of expression they would remain dumb or continue to turn out travesties like *The Scarlet Empress*. They have nothing to say. The vaunted directors, aping the stars in the magnitude of their self-esteem, are but clever virtuosos—the fiddlers who play the tune. Only there is no Beethoven, no Mozart, not even a Franz Lehar for them to interpret. What they have to

bring to life is the tattered corpse of an idea riven by the paltry minds of departmental heads and mangled at the hands of box-office accountants.

Cinema has not yet produced the creative artist who has something to say, can work out his theme, script it, direct it and edit it. Even Russia has found few of its esteemed directors able to evolve a theme or construct a scenario worthy of the technique for which they are justly famous. That is why Soviet writers have had to be called in to the cinema's aid. Elsewhere in these pages Berthold Viertel pleads eloquently for a similar move to be made in this country, and pending the emergence of the creative director proper, the removal of the scenario hacks from the studios would undoubtedly be a step in the right direction, and might allow a new spirit to permeate into production. But there are also many other obstacles which must be overcome if the commercial studios are to turn out satisfying entertainment, let alone art. Photography, sound, design, editing, each assume an importance in the eyes of their exponents disproportionate to their real significance in relation to the film as a whole. That these "comic barriers" can be broken down and each specialized worker made to serve in rational subservience to a controlling, creative intelligence, John Grierson has abundantly proved in the modest seclusion of Blackheath.

It is significant that men like Grierson, Flaherty, Rotha, have chosen documentary in preference to studio work. Because it is produced under saner and freer conditions and is generally the conception of a single mind, documentary is the one species of film which achieves a unity approaching artistic satisfaction. In this respect it is to be regretted that *Man of Aran* is not the successor to *Tabu* and *Nanook of the North* that had been anticipated, for it represents an important experiment on the part of a commercial company in financing an independent film-maker to produce a picture according to his own ideas. In sponsoring Flaherty, Gaumont British created a precedent which it is hoped will be a forerunner of an established policy, for only the success of the commercially sponsored, independently produced reality film will ever induce the industry to consider introducing a similar system in the studios. Memories of Eisenstein and Stroheim, and a knowledge of their present personnel, may make America nervous of further experiment, but producers in this country, not yet hide-bound by tradition, must be persuaded to give the artist who has something to say full freedom of expression.

Not till then can cinema take its destined place in the forefront of the arts.

NORMAN WILSON.

THE FUNCTION OF THE DIRECTOR

2. THE STUDIO DIRECTOR

BERTHOLD VIERTEL

LAYMEN with no insight into picture making do not know what a director does. I do not think it bad that they should not know, for when the performance is so perfect that the director is not noticed he may well be pleased with himself. But one is so often asked about it. Audiences get an impression, sometimes an overwhelming one, of the importance of a conductor, because they see him with their own eyes directing the orchestra. This impression is stamped on their minds, although the conductor's actions may be no more than a show. The more effective the show the greater their personal conviction of his importance. They do not realize that the difference between a Toscanini and a Furtwangler is a result of painstaking rehearsals.

At the theatre, the audience is left more in the dark. It is rather embarrassing to see a gentleman in a dress suit appear after the performance; people, if they are not hardened first nighters, whisper to each other: "Who is this man? Is he the author? What is he?" Actually, on the legitimate stage, the importance of the director varies tremendously. Between the technician who regulates the machinery and the interpreter who penetrates the work of a genius, recreating it in flesh and blood, or the man who changes the play during rehearsals, there are many degrees. But fundamentally, no matter who is directing, the situation on the legitimate stage is this: before the first rehearsal starts, the director is usually given a complete play; between these printed words and the personality of an actor which develops during a situation on the stage, between these two existing elements there is still an immense space for creation.

What a director creates lies not only in the atmosphere of the whole, in the bringing together of all individuals until they are shaped into one family, until they have the structure of one world: he not only creates what we may call the style of the whole performance which is expressed in every detail down to the smallest point, not only composes the action and translates the vision which he got from the work into pictorial reality, as costumes, sets and the like: but is called upon to cope with the thousand little problems which are continually cropping up, each one with a thousand different solutions. The stage, like life itself, is overflowing with

immediate needs for immediate decisions. No matter how much each helper and each personality connected with the work spends his own gifts, the centre of all this little world is dependent on the sensitivity, the mind and the judgment of the one man who not only represents the writer and actors, but who is also the first audience; who, by sitting in front of the stage and watching from without what happens thereon, is able to jump in at any moment and keep good things alive, cut off a wrong movement, increase the general enthusiasm and make everyone work strictly to the great purpose. It is an obvious paradox that a fool who sits before the stage may be wiser than a genius acting on it who, by being a part of the play, becomes an object over which he loses command. What makes the real director is an imagination which unites these various elements, these countless kaleidoscopic details into one complete whole. No matter whether it be by love or by strictness, harsh words or soft, the real director's spirit must, above all things, encourage. He must give impulses and respond to impulses, he must be at once active and passive. A man may be an excellent critic, have a great analytical mind, know everything about a play, about acting and the stage, and not be an able director because he misses the positiveness which keeps things going. A very simple man, not at all highly educated, may have much more warmth and life to spend, may be endowed to a far greater extent by that all-important gift, a combining instinct.

In the cinema, between the director and the completed film, there is a vast and complicated machinery. First he has to translate everything he sees into photography which changes something seen with natural eyesight into something new and different. This technical means of transferring the things you see in nature on to a two-dimensional screen is further complicated, now that pictures talk, by the machinery of sound. A second mechanical world has sprung to life, completing the whole technique and opening up endless possibilities which have yet to be explored. Apart from the necessity of dealing with these technical contrivances and using them as a means of creation, a director must be able to divide his future picture from the start into little particles of a kaleidoscope, create them separately one after the other, always bearing in mind the final unity. This also concerns the actor; he is never in a position to follow at will the flux of an action, but is forced to do particles of a scene jerked out of continuity. In order that the actor may give as much of himself as on the legitimate stage, he is put at the mercy of the director who alone has the whole film continuously in his mind and must control every mood, every detail which, thrown apart as they are, must ultimately fit together.

But these special conditions of filming originate in the script, which has already been built up as a kind of architecture of technical details which no writer could really imagine and which are definitely left to the mind of the man who has to produce them on the floor. Thus the activity of the film director starts as soon as an idea is ready to be developed into a moving picture. Only a few writers with special directorial gifts have developed the faculty to think in moving picture continuity.

Usually the process starts in this way; a subject is chosen and is talked over, not in continuity, but analytically, as a lawyer discusses a case with his client. It is a general handling of ideas which belong to the picture, whence develops a unity of action which is built up into scenes and made to flow smoothly in a continuous direction. Every picture is a machine which has to be built consistently, each shot must be linked indissolubly to the next. When at last a continuous scenario is developed the scenes are broken down into shots. If this final shooting script is the work of another mind, it is impossible for any creative director to adhere to it, however completely it may have been worked out. In practice, on the floor, he will so often be forced to change the viewpoint.

To augment these difficulties pictures are produced by an industry. This industry is very unlike the legitimate stage: it does not wait for writers to come to its doors, who have something to express, who want to deliver a message of their hearts, of their minds, which they have developed during sleepless nights. The legitimate stage lives on the messages of people who have carried their subjects in their hearts, maturing them perhaps throughout many years. The moving picture industry gives orders. The moving picture industry collects subjects and makes writers work on them, within a rigid time limit. There is little space left for organic growth from within, the work must be done rather under the conditions of enforced labour, and all progress is watched and supervised by special experts. The industry is in a growing process of mechanization and division of labour. For every part of the picture a department is responsible. This department is not concerned with a single picture like a writer who sits meditating in his room. America, as the most industrial country of the world, as the country of mechanization and rationalization of labour, goes on mechanizing picture work. No longer is the director supposed to cut his own picture, although the process of cutting which I have not yet mentioned is the final completion of the film, a last sifting, an ultimate creation of the material. An enormously complicated system of departments, split into a multitude of human beings, reaches without interruption into the creative process, each in its own field destroying every unity of mood,

putting grave obstacles against the singleminded conception of one man. To anyone who watches the process, it seems almost impossible for one man to hold all these elements together with unity as an aim and still, at the end, to have produced a work intact and single in purpose.

This is why original messages so seldom reach the screen. The American industry is enormously efficient at producing high-frequency film machines. It is at its best when using robust themes in those matter-of-fact stories on which it pours sentimentality as a pastry cook pours icing on a cake. This sounds rather an annihilating verdict. Nevertheless I admire the vitality of quite a few of these pictures, which contain, apart from striking detail, a victorious wittiness, and are, so many of them, technically perfect. As the aim of the picture industry is the entertainment of masses, this aim can be reached by mechanized methods. But one should not forget that pictures have not only to entertain the masses, but must give them their mental daily bread. These two different aims must be approached by two different methods. The one, a strict use of mechanization, the other, a humanization of mechanics. Among the hundreds of pictures produced in a year in America, only eight or ten break through with an original message. But these eight or ten pictures are undoubtedly international masterpieces which advance film making throughout the world. Directors who are able to deliver these messages at the end, after all those instances of obstruction, until the assembly of distributors who so often decide the ultimate fate of pictures, have to be built like heavyweight champions. But they must be heavyweight champions who have not lost their tenderness of heart or their distinctiveness of vision. Even on the legitimate stage a lot of practical work has to be done in order to bring poetry to life. In pictures the practical work becomes the task of a giant.

Things are in this respect a good deal easier in Britain. The British industry, growing up and developing visibly from day to day, is, of course, following the American methods, but as yet more gently, while Europe to a certain extent puts up a resistance to mass production, still preferring home-made goods. Although it is technically more difficult, and the organization is not so highly developed, it is easier to deliver a personal message here. What I would like to fight for is that this chance should be used to a greater extent, that more and more pictures should be done which have something to say before they try to say it.

That is at bottom the question of the script. Being passionately both a writer and a director and believing in pictures as a creative means, I insist that I would very much like to improve the position of the kind of writer who writes for films, not only because they pay

him more money but because they give him a means of expression. To find these people, to encourage them, to introduce them to film technique, is my ambition. There is an urgent need for film writers who can develop as did our best dramatists. There I believe lies the vital source of film improvement and the future of the talking picture which till now has taken no more than the first few steps to conquer its enormous possibilities.

PRODUCTION METHODS IN SOVIET RUSSIA

HELEN SCHOENI

THE film industry in Soviet Russia is a child of the revolution. It came into being during the stormy years of the new regime and has developed into one of the chief purveyors of propaganda. Lenin saw in the new-born art a graphic means of educating the vast hordes of illiterate peasants in the ways of Marxian dialectic. With its *raison d'être* defined for it at the outset, all that remained for the industry was to develop along the lines which would make it a compelling force in the education of the workers and widespread in its influence.

Since it drew its first breath in a land where the first person singular possessive pronoun was anathema, and all industries were under the government ægis, the issues of competition, money making and personality plus were *a priori* impossibilities. It is not surprising then that the film industry is organised under a central kino bureau, which is virtually a minor commissariat, called the State Cine Photo Department, or GUKF. This amalgamation and centralization of all the branches of production, distribution, and exhibition, is for the purpose of attaining efficiency, a close censorship and control of policy by the government, and the concentration and arrangement of output necessary to place films within the reach of the largest number of consumers.

The policy of film production in the Soviet Union, as defined by GUKF, is to establish a cheap cinema for all, that would serve all, and in doing this keep alive the desire for liberation, and to encourage

co-operation in the task of defending and rebuilding Russia. In the accomplishment of this task their aim is to manufacture raw film stock and, so far as possible, keep it "all Russian," to increase home industry and decrease unemployment. The present Russian raw film is vastly inferior to the European import of panchromatic stock which was used in many of their past films. This temporary handicap will be overcome in due time, but it is a serious drawback to the industry at present.

The general subject matter for film treatment has, of necessity, been dictated by the revolution and the dicta of the Five Year Plans. All scenarios must pass the censorship board of the central committee of GUKF. In this way all counter-revolutionary material or "bourgeois" outlooks can be nipped in the bud. A "plan" can be carried out and a balanced diet of films can be governed at the outset. No tidal waves of gangster films or costume plays sweep over the Soviet movie-going public as they do elsewhere. Accompanying each scenario submitted to GUKF must be a questionnaire which gives the name of the scenario; the author; which studio is apt to produce it; what it is likely to cost; when it will be released for showing; from what sort of material the scenario is drawn (Eisenstein in submitting his scenario *October* to GUKF wrote in answer to this question: "Revolutionary Utopia"); and lastly, what the characteristics of the scenario are. Referring again to *October*, Eisenstein wrote: "It films the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The scenario groups around the period from the February to the October Revolutions. It is made from historic material. The scenario is calculated to appeal to a wide worker and peasant audience."

The scenarios chosen for production by GUKF are assigned to the different studios throughout Russia if arrangements have not already been made by a studio to film a certain script. Many of the scenarios in the past have been the work of directors in the employ of a studio. In such cases the script is returned to its author for production.

The Soviet film studios, called Kino factories, are built on a much more modest scale than the Hollywood or European film plants. However, the new Sovkino plant in the Sparrow Hills, on the outskirts of Moscow, boasts of possessing the largest sound studio in the world as well as a huge tank for the filming of aquatic scenes. Here under one roof will be the large sound stage, two smaller sound-proofed studios, offices for directors and technicians, a laboratory for the development of films and a small pre-view room, a restaurant, make-up rooms, storehouses, workshops, etc., all connected so that studio workers need not bundle up in going from one place to another during the severe winters.

The more modest Mejrabpom Studio, in the heart of Moscow, can boast of having in its employ such directors of note as Ozep, Kules-

hov, Protosanov, Alexandrov and Bela Belacz. Cramped for space and handicapped by insufficient technical devices they have managed to produce many of the most outstanding films to come out of Russia. It is here that Kuleshov recently made *The Great Consoler*, a film based on Upton Sinclair's biography of O. Henry's two years in prison.

Each studio works on what is known as a one year plan of production. Of the scripts assigned to them by GUKF scarcely more than fifty per cent. are filmed in the allotted time. Being under no compulsion of competing in a saturated market, and labouring under no long-term contracts with high salaried "stars," the studios work with a leisureliness that would make an American producer fancy himself on holiday. The average time spent on a film ranges from eight months to a year. Many of the epic films of the past have extended over two and three years. This seeming geologic sense of time is partly explained by the fact that all work on location must be done during the summer months as the severity of the winter, coupled with the rainy fall, makes outdoor work an impossibility for the greater proportion of the year. With the advent of sound films and a growing tendency away from "films of the land" more work is being done in the studios and a larger output is resulting.

From the scripts submitted to a studio a director is free to choose the one he wishes to work on. Here there is none of the capitalistic system of assigning a director to a script which he often feels is an insult to his intelligence and taste. Directors work on a monthly salary basis. The wage scale is flexible and varies with the fame and talent of the director. Salaries range from 400 to 1,200 roubles a month. Eisenstein receives a monthly salary of 1,200 roubles, while his former assistant, Alexandrov, received 800. If the director is also the author of the scenario he receives the outright sale price for the script as well as a percentage of the box-office intake at each showing of the film in all movie houses. The amount paid for a script again varies according to the fame of its author and its significance as a theme and the excellence of its treatment. The amounts paid for long feature films range from 1,000 to 10,000 roubles. Eisenstein is reported to have sold his recent scenario, *M.M.M.*, for 30,000 roubles. All box-office intake nets the director one per cent while the author receives one and a half per cent of the totals.

Once the director has chosen his scenario he is free to choose his camera-man, technicians and assistants from the regular staff of studio employees. He is likewise given *carte blanche* in casting. The sole restriction placed upon him is in the matter of the cost of the production. Once the estimated cost has been approved by GUKF he is bound to remain within this budget. An administrator or financial manager is assigned to him by the studio head and he works

with the director to keep within the bounds of reason and handles all the money outlays. The cost of making films range from 500,000 roubles to a million.

Each studio maintains a staff of "second line" actors on their pay-roll. It is understood that a director will use these actors wherever it is possible but he is never compelled to utilize them at the cost of obvious miscasting, as is often the case in Hollywood. He is free to get his actors from whatever source he chooses. Because of the leisurely pace at which the studios work, high salaried actors are seldom found in the studio but are engaged from the legitimate theatres when needed. Moskvina and Bataloff, both of the Moscow Art Theatre, are two outstanding artists who have been called in to create notable rôles in films of the past. Actors invited to work on a film are given contracts for a single film. They are paid on the monthly salary basis. They aggregate as much as 30,000 roubles on a picture thus made.

The "second line" or supporting feature players, as we call them, receive a monthly salary ranging from 300 to 600 roubles. When a special type is needed which the studio is not able to supply from their staff of actors a director is free to go out into the highways and byways to find him. A "real" peasant, a burly prizefighter type of workman or a former aristocrat, in need of extra money, are able in this way to earn fifteen roubles a day. In the case of mob scenes, such as those which figured so prominently in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, the people are regimented to give their services free as one of their contributions to the state.

Once a film is shot the director spends the ensuing weeks or months in the editing and cutting of his film. One need not go into a discussion here of the principles of montage and creative editing which have grown out of the Russian system. To the readers of *Cinema Quarterly* the ingenuity and artistic results gained by this post-shooting study of filmic material is an old story. It remains only to be said that all Russian film directors edit their own film. Many of them look upon this period as their most creative contribution to the film's total effect.

The Soviet film is the work of one man, and his assistants who are fulfilling his plans. To have seventeen people mull over a scenario, whipping it into shape, filling it full of "sure-fire gags" and clichés is unthinkable in the Soviet film industry. If a film is a hodge-podge and misses fire the blame can rightfully be laid at the door of the director.

Once the film has been pre-viewed and released from the studio it is sent to the central distribution bureau, quaintly called by the Russians the "Let Out On Hire Bureau." From this bureau the exhibitor can choose what films he will show to his patrons. There is

no problem of high-pressure advertising to outsell one's competitor in a glutted market. There is no question of accepting insultingly inferior films in order to gain one good product in a "block" of films produced by a studio.

The only advertising carried on is done in the newspapers, on the kiosks and modest billboards distributed at focal points throughout the city, or by displays outside the theatre where the picture is showing. The marquee carries the name of the film rather than our familiar "star." On the programme the names of the director, musician, cameraman and actors all get equal emphasis. This type of advertisement, or more properly announcement, is indicative of the Communist attitude toward theatre-going. Some are intrigued by the title of the film, others by the scenarist's fame, others go because they have attached a director's name with a certain quality, others go to see a favourite actor create a new rôle. Whatever the reasons may be, the fact remains the theatres are always crowded.

There are no continuous showings in Russia. A film is run through for one audience. The house is emptied, aired and then a new group comes in to see it. "Chasers" are an unknown phenomenon in the Soviet kino. While a gathering audience awaits the opening of the doors into the main auditorium they are entertained in the foyer. The programmes vary from a symphony concert to chamber music, a popular soloist or a dancer performing, as the people sit or stroll quietly about or drink tea in the nearby café.

With a growing leniency in the subject matter of the more recent films, which include a greater number possessing a universal appeal, it is not too much to predict that the Soviet studios will become dangerous rivals to other producing countries. It is conceivable that there will be an exodus of our writers, directors and actors to where originality, artistic integrity and freedom for creative work maintain.

FILMS AND MUSIC

A CHAPTER in Constant Lambert's lively, lucid and witty study of modern music, "Music Ho!" (London: Faber. 10s. 6d.) is devoted to mechanical music and the cinema and for once we have a serious and sympathetic examination of music in films by a composer. In spite of its ephemeral nature, he considers that the film is the only art whose progress is not at the moment depressing to watch. Films, he thinks, "have the emotional impact for the twentieth century that operas had the nineteenth. Pudovkin and Eisenstein are the true successors of Mussorgsky, D. W. Griffiths is our Puccini, Cecil B. de Mille our Meyerbeer, and René Clair our Offenbach." Though he mis-spells Al Jolson's name, Lambert shows in his other references that he knows well the films he is writing about and his experience is that "the film is the most vigorous art form of to-day."

THE G.P.O. GETS SOUND

JOHN GRIERSON

I SHALL not, in this, attempt a theory of sound but merely record the sudden possession of sound apparatus. The plaintive miracle of this event, the learned but sometimes too hopeful followers of cinema might note. Whatever one's theories, access to the means of production is not easy for art. The apparatus costs three thousand pounds or thereabouts; the re-recording apparatus is a luxury over and above that. This is the machine which orchestrates the different elements of sound—the natural sounds, the music, the dialogue—and, in effect, makes a considered sound strip possible. Add to these purely engineering costs the cost of your sound cameramen; add the cost of orchestras at two guineas per instrument per session of four hours; add the cost of a created music. Access to the means of production is clearly not a simple matter. That we have found an economic basis for it in government propaganda and, with it, have retained the same freedom for directors we enjoyed with the E.M.B., represents a relief and thankfulness I leave to the imagination.

We waited five years for sound at the E.M.B. We saw our first film fall in the gulf between silence and sound, and our subsequent films pile up in silence on a fading market. Our solitary access to sound last year was bound to be a disappointing one, for, selling some films to G-B., we were reduced to attendant orchestra and attendant commentator. Under such conditions responsibility passed out of our hands and experiment was plainly impossible. The result—in *Industrial Britain*, *O'er Hill and Dale*, *Up Stream* and the others—was, I suppose, competent. From any considered point of view it represented no contribution whatever to the art and practice of sound.

By access to sound, I mean an intimate relation between the producer and his instruments. I mean a relationship as direct as we have established for him in the matter of camerawork. He is his own first cameraman and the silly mystery with which professional cameramen once surrounded their very simple box of tricks, is over and done with. With us, the producer is his own sound man too, and in the same simple sense. In the studio the old camera nonsense has

become attendant on the apparatus of sound. Mysterious bells are rung, and rung as for some great religious ceremony. High priests gabble in the same essential idiom as Thibetan priests over their prayer wheel, and a dozen perfectly unnecessary, or perfectly unimportant hangers-on, create atmosphere in the background. To convince so many important young men that so far as production is concerned they are only a bunch of chauffeurs who should be driving the car where you want it to go, is obviously too difficult for a mere documentary director. And it is probably not worth his trouble. Other phalanxes of experts lie beyond: knowing exactly—on one showing of your film and a couple of rehearsals—what music you want. And with studio overheads—the hangers-on nursing their overtime as religiously as their machines—any variation from the routine job is too expensive anyway.

By access to sound I mean the absolute elimination of these comic barriers between the producer and the result he wants. I mean the elimination of both economic and ideologic overheads. At the G.P.O. we have established it from the beginning. We have one sound engineer, and a good one. For the rest, if we want music—and we do not want it much—we find it cheaper to have it written for us. If we want natural sound, the producer drives out and gets it. If we want to orchestrate sound we sit in the sound van and arrange the re-recording as we think best. If we want to play with sound images, or arrange choral effects, or in any way experiment, we have no one's permission to ask and no considerable overheads to worry about, because we do most of the work ourselves. We are even free, as on one occasion recently, to make our own orchestra. The instruments and players were as follows. One rewriter (Legg), one trumpet, two typewriters (office staff), one empty beer bottle (blown for a ship's siren), one projector (by the projectionist), some conversation, two pieces of sand paper (Elton), the studio silence bell (myself), cymbals and triangle (Wright). Walter Leigh arranged and conducted. The result was our title music for *6.30 Collection*. It cost us the hire of the trumpet.

Indeed it is remarkable that our experiments have all made for cheaper sound. It costs five pounds, I believe, to have a professional commentator, but we have never thought of spending so much on so little. We do the job ourselves if we want a commentary, and save both the five pounds and the quite unendurable detachment of the professional accent. Better still, if we are showing workmen at work, we get the workmen on the job to do their own commentary, with idiom and accent complete. It makes for intimacy and authenticity, and nothing we could do would be half so good. You will see the result in both *Cable Ship* and

Under the City. In *6.30 Collection* — a highly symphonic account of the Western District Sorting Office in London—Legg carried the connective commentary. Natural noises and some odd conversational scraps picked up by the microphone, told the rest of the story. No music was used in this film. In *Under the City*, we had music written for the beginning and the end and for a very beautiful slow motion sequence of an opening cable. In *Cable Ship* we borrowed some Mendelssohn to take a ship sentimentally to sea. The continuous undercurrent of music we have renounced. It was expensive, and none of us knew what it was there for anyway. We leave it to the less businesslike commercials.

These represent first variations and possibly not very important ones. *6.30 Collection* however, is probably the first documentary made entirely with authentic sound. It was not of course, a case of taking our sound anyhow. The noises of the sorting office were to some extent orchestrated. The racket of the interior grew with the increasing traffic. It swelled, it had lulls. It was broken by the repeated call of the bagmen coming to empty more letters on the facing tables, by the staccato machine-gun beat of the stamp-cancelling machines, by the careful introduction of oddments of conversation on allotments and this and that, by the choral effort of the dispatch men calling the destination of their bags across half the world, by a beautiful scrap of whistling. When the rush was over and the litter was swept from the deserted and now silent tables, we synchronized the swish of the brushes and crossed the sound of a starting train. And on the train and the ship and the aeroplane which followed, we crossed the chorus of destinations across half the world, repeated in its authentic monotone.

I do not pretend these are other than beginnings in the use of sound, but I feel they are right beginnings. I noticed when we showed the film at the Phoenix in London, that the natural noises and the overheard comments, orders, calls and conversations, created a new and curious relationship between the audience and the screen. The distance was broken down in a certain intimate delight—I presume—at seeing strangers so near. Eavesdropping, who knows, may yet be one of the pillars of our art. There was one superb sequence that we could not use. A dispatchman, edging unwittingly up to the microphone, loosed his more private opinion of some new and officious supervisor. The vocabulary was limited, but the variations were ingenious.

What we shall call the crossing of sound, to save the more difficult mention of asynchronism, is obviously a first consideration even in such simple experiments. There was a dilemma in the making of *Cable Ship*, for we began and ended on the same trucking shot of the International Telephone Exchange, to which our cable

story related. As the first shot passed from one foreign switchboard to another, it was synchronized with telephone patter in the different languages involved. But to repeat this at the end would, we felt, be very ordinary, for the cable story had added other, less obvious, sounds to the patter of languages. Behind them were cable ships searching for faults, grappling for cables, mending them. The second time, we synchronized with the sound of a navigation order on the bridge of a ship, the order repeated, the ship's telegraph rung. Someone has just told me that he heard thirty years ago a discourse on flight, in which the lecturer maintained that the secret of bird flight lay not in the feathers, but in the air-spaces between the feathers. This I think, will serve very well for a working definition of the art of sound. The spaces between are the incidental sounds which, in a species of imagery, give perspective.

In our B.B.C. film and Savings Bank film, there will be, I hope, more mature developments. At one point in *6.30 Collection*, we thought of introducing the voices of the letters as they passed along the conveyor belt. We bought, in Woolworth's, a sixpenny book on "letter writing for all occasions," and had a mind to build up a rigmarole of excerpts from business letters, love letters, coy letters, angry letters, desperate letters, vain letters; but the trick was finally reserved. In the Savings Bank film, we shall probably put it into effect, and for better reason. The Savings Bank is probably the finest example of mechanized clerking in the country. It is a wilderness of filing systems and of machines which add up your deposits and calculate your interest. If I remember rightly, they even go to the trouble of checking up their calculations and confessing any wrong they have done you. The visuals plainly did less than justice to the reality which was there, tucked away in a myriad numbered slips: representing so many human cares and fears and hopes and responsibilities. Detaching them from the regimented mass, it is easy to see how resolutions are made every new year, are broken, are taken up again: how no description of the citizen's year can be half so true or half so intimate as the rise and fall of the millions at the Savings Banks. Something of this we shall try to tell, for over the mechanical visuals we propose to put a chorus indicating—it may be in short snatches of confession, or in plain objective record, or in *vers libres*—the human reference behind the slips of the filing cabinets.

Once, in Paris, before the coming of sound, I heard an *émigré* choir sing a background for *The Village of Sin*. They sang a harvest song for a brilliant harvest scene, and brought the audience to its feet. Walter Creighton recorded a similar chorus for his Canadian harvest scene in *One Family*, but made the mistake of associating "We Plough the Fields and Scatter" with the manipulators of



Net-caster of Duwa, Negombo. From Basil Wright's documentary of Ceylon. Synchronisation will be done with the aid of natives who have been brought to London specially for the purpose.



Three Heads :
Granite Buddha, Kandyan
Dancer, Devil Dancer. From
Basil Wright's documentary
of Ceylon.

the Winnipeg Wheat Pit. Chorus does not stop there. In *Three Cornered Moon*, you remember, snatches of conversation, held together, made a choral accompaniment for an unemployment sequence. People spoke in truncated desolation. In *Beast of the City* the monotonous sound of police calls on the wireless swept across the crime of a community. What development there might be if the often beautiful formulae of sound and word which occur in life were to be given dramatic value ! I hold myself a house lease in eighteenth century English in which I swear by the Blessed Trinity, and an insurance contract with Lloyds is the most attractive hunk of English in commercial use to-day ; a repetition of Lloyds list with its lovely ships' names and strange ports of sailing would make a splendid attendant sound on the commerce of the world.

And why not, at last, use the poet ? The *vers librists* were made for cinema. The monologues of Joyce, covering as they do the subjective aspects of human action, are as important for the sound film as the dialogue of the dramatist. The masked changes in O'Neill between the word spoken and the word thought represent the simplest properties of any considered sound film. Eisenstein has possibly put the monologue too high in his account, by isolating it from chorus. It is only one species of choral effect, limited somewhat to personal story. The larger possibilities lie beyond monologue, I believe, in the poetry which, in the case of streets, say, will arrange some essential story in the mumble of windows, pub counters and passers-by. Our B.B.C. film will make some effort in the complementary direction. We try there to make our childrens' talk (a reading from Kingsley's "Heroes") cross-section an afternoon. We play Beethoven to cross-section a London night in one mood, and jazz to cross-section it in another mood. We read a psalm across starting machines, and a Shakespeare sonnet, with instructions to shipping mixed, across the coming of night.

SECRETS OF NATURE

DISNEY'S work apart, no other short films have so high an international reputation as the *Secrets of Nature*. Inaugurated in 1922 the series now includes over 150 films which may have made certain concessions to box-office regretted by the purists, but we must be grateful to a commercial enterprise which did not give us in their stead the wise-cracking imbecilities of many American "scientific shorts." In "Secrets of Nature" (London: Faber. 12s. 6d.) the story of the films is told by Mary Field and Percy Smith. The former writes of filming bird life and of zoo films and adds an explanatory chapter on editing and sound ; and the latter occupies the major portion of the book with a valuable description of filming insect and plant life. An essentially modest account does not hide from us the fact that it has been Smith's films which have brought chief distinction to the series.

STAGE PEOPLE AND FILM THINGS

C. R. JONES

THE HISTORY of the film as an art is that of its struggle against theatricality. In the 'twenties of this century it seemed that this struggle had been at last successful. But the arrival of the sound film and the consequent disorganisation threw the cinema back into the subservience to theatrical ideas from which it had only recently escaped.

The struggle was renewed and has met with a considerable measure of success. If we compare (say) *Morning Glory* and *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* (1928) we notice a number of important advances in technique. The photographer has left the stalls; the scenarist has emerged from the prompt-box; the director has a firmer hold on the production now that he is no longer confined to the wings. In fact, photographed plays get fewer and fewer each year, and real films are seen more and more often.

But we have to admit that these films, though often well made, are seldom worth making. Even in those like *Power and Glory*, on which a certain amount of thought has been expended, we can find only a painfully poor return. For the studios, though free from theatrical technique, still concern themselves almost exclusively with theatrical subject-matter. But, if the cinema is ever to become anything more than a starring vehicle, if ever it is going to develop a dramatic art of its own, it must realize the limits of its field of work. These limits are determined by the nature of its technical equipment.

Both the film and the stage are almost entirely concerned with Personal Drama—the presentation and solution of a conflict between a few individuals. It depends for its success on the extent to which it enables the spectator to neglect his knowledge that it is a fiction and temporarily to identify himself with its protagonists. The dramatist must, therefore, make vividness of presentation his first object and avoid everything (including verisimilitude) which will exhaust his audience's interest or distract their attention from the essentials of the conflict. With this in mind he proceeds to the choice of medium. If he should pick the film he is confronted at the outset by a great difficulty. He must convince the audience of the force of his characters' personality—otherwise his drama will become a battle of shadows. In the theatre he brings before them a flesh and blood actor—a man trained in the use of personal

magnetism. But in the cinema all he has is a shadow on a screen, which has no attraction at all apart from that which he gives it.

In the early days of the cinema this difficulty was insuperable. Films had no characters, only types—the Hero, the Villain, the Funny Man. But when D. W. Griffith discovered the use of the close-up the creation of character became possible. The camera can now take us so close to the film-actor that his slightest expression becomes significant. Thus, though the dramatist must dispense with the assistance of personal attraction, he can use by way of compensation a close concentration on significant detail which is impossible in a theatre. He can create character as well in a film as in a play.

But drama is something more than creation of character (which is “starring”). It is the opposition of characters and its reasoned solution. The dramatist brings two characters on to the stage, each of whom can claim his share of the audience’s attention without encroaching on that necessary to his antagonist. But if the dramatist wishes to bring another character into a film the procedure is less simple. He must either withdraw the camera until it is able to take in both, or else pan from one to the other. If he should do the former he loses the concentration the close-up gave and presents his audience with the photograph of a play; while another close-up would obliterate in the mind of the audience the impression of the first which it is absolutely essential should be maintained; moreover a film composed entirely of close-ups would be first tiring and ultimately ineffective.

This is an obvious simplification of what occurs in actual practice. Cameramen are so competent that they almost convince us that their wanderings have a purpose—certainly they make us forget that all they are doing is dithering between the middle distance and the close-up, in a perpetual uncertainty whether to settle in the stalls or at the microscope.

But, however cleverly it may be concealed, the dilemma is none the less real; it cleaves in two any attempt to film Personal Drama. Either the Persons obliterate the Drama, or the Drama conceals the Persons. The part is made to equal the whole, which is absurd.

I do not mean to say that all Personal films are wholly worthless. There have, on the contrary, been innumerable excellent studies of individual personalities. That is the star system; and at its best, when Pabst is directing Brigette Helm, Wesley Ruggles Mae West, or Stroheim himself, it produces exciting results. But the excitement is really born of anticipation. “When this interesting person really gets going,” we think, “what a grand film it will be.” But they never do. By the time they have been created the film is over and we are left with something that is not quite a case-history and not quite a work of art. Neither flesh nor fowl, it is only a good

red herring distracting attention from better lines of work.

The majority of films are star films, in which the drama is sacrificed to the principal character. The few in which the director concentrates on his plot can be equally exciting but (except for light comedy like *The Guardsman* or farces like the work of Tom Walls) they are equally unsatisfactory. The gyrations of puppets can never be more than a pastime for a wet afternoon. But more ambitious attempts to hold the balance between character and plot (such as Mamoulian's *Song of Songs*) are seldom even that. Personalities and relationships are dangled before our eyes just long enough to be enticing but not sufficiently long to be understood. We are first tantalized, then bewildered, and finally bored.

Up to this point I should have the cordial agreement of the theatricals. St. John Ervine, for instance, devotes two columns about once a month to demonstrating that the cinema can never encroach on the province of the stage—Personal Drama. But when he goes on to conclude that the cinema can never produce any drama at all we part company. For this is the purest nonsense, based on a ridiculously limited view of the nature of drama. Professional critics are often unable to distinguish the wood and the trees. But to conclude that there is no wood because an artist is barking up the wrong tree seems to me a deplorable example of mental myopia.

This blindness is all the more surprising because the elements of the other kind of drama are more obvious now than ever before. Every man is all his life a protagonist in two great conflicts—he has to maintain his claim to consideration from his fellows, to establish a satisfactory relationship with People; and he has to earn his livelihood and fulfil his duties as a member of civilized society, to assert his supremacy over Things. It is this second conflict—the drama of Men and Things—that is of such peculiar interest to us to-day. After centuries of effort we have overcome the opposition of natural forces and enabled ourselves to produce an abundance of material goods. Yet the machines which provide the means of life are depriving millions of men of the opportunity of earning a livelihood. Primitive tribes have evolved into the highly complex organisms of modern national states, and they seem bent on using their unprecedented powers chiefly in preparations for mutual destruction. It is incredible that anybody should ignore these two tragic paradoxes and all their innumerable effects. They form a background for many novels and poetry, they disturb the contemplation of the painter, they are even crowded on to the stage. Only the cinema has not heard of them, and continues to exist in a world of its own where material conditions, the controlling forces of many people's lives, have no appreciable effect on the conduct of the inhabitants.



From "Edinburgh," directed by Marion Grierson for the Travel Association. The shot is taken from the Calton Hill looking towards the Castle.



Further stills from "Edinburgh." The upper two illustrate the quaint closes and courts typical of Edinburgh and the lower is a glimpse of the Grassmarket through a gun-port in the Castle wall.

To lovers of any form of drama its failure to seize so great an opportunity would be depressing. But to the cinema fan it must appear criminal and self-destructive, not only because the drama of Men and Things needs telling, but because it is the cinema's peculiar province. The material is there, the medium is there, the audience waits only for the creation. And stimulated by so fruitful a combination of circumstances the heads of the cinema industry are put together and succeed in producing a well-groomed piece of nonsense like *On the Air*. The cinema fan, as he swallows his weekly dose of syncopated sex, would think the directors completely ignorant of the times they live in were it not for the strong development of one contemporary characteristic, the capacity to abuse technical skill and to miss great opportunities.

These opportunities can never be taken by the stage dramatist. He is concerned not with People but with Persons. His scope is limited by the size of his stage. But the cinema has no bounds. Nothing is too big or too small or too complicated to be photographed; no two things are so completely disconnected that they may not be juxtaposed on the screen. And it is this ability to comprehend the smallest details and the most vast designs that makes Environmental Drama its peculiar province.

RAMPANT REFORMERS

ERIC M. KNIGHT

THE most newsworthy of all cinema items in America to-day concerns no feature film production. It is the sudden, tremendous, well-organized revolt of the public (led by reformers) against the Hollywood movie.

The other day I sat in the largest public dining-room of one of the largest cities in the United States. Although Americans are notable luncheon-goers and speech-listeners, I was amazed at the crowd. Every seat was taken. The Hollywood movie was deplored as immoral; basely misrepresentative of America; the source of a vast amount of juvenile crime and sex delinquency. Clubwomen, civic leaders, clergy of all denominations, applauded. Funds were raised to continue the war on "the immoral movie."

So at last, it seems, the shiny, shoddy material of the California celluloid-factories is gagging in the throat of this land. It is as if the diet has, at last, made the public retch.

Yet, real as this sudden organized revolt is, it is important for those interested in the film as such to value properly such an uprising. Will it mean anything to cinema?

The uprising here comes from two sources: the church and the reform group. The Catholic Church, generally slow to wrath in such affairs, has its sentiment reflected in the public utterance of a leading Philadelphia official who declared that "one movie can often undo the work that the church can do in two years" in regard to children. He follows with stronger armament: that if movies don't improve the only answer would be "call for a boycott by the Sacred Heart organization." No idle threat, this, for such a move by the powerful Roman Catholic Church would affect no less than 70,000 people in this area alone.

Protestant bodies are no less suddenly antagonistic to the motion picture as food for young stomachs. The other element is the reform group. It will be hard for Britain to understand the Puritanical strain that runs strongly through so many Americans and makes them natural-born zealots in reforms. It is a curious national trait. Most Englishmen are happy as long as no one passes a law that interferes with their private comfort; many Americans are never so happy as when pushing through a law that forces everyone to conform to a law "that ought to be good for them." We are out to save everyone. This reform element now finds itself in the same boat with the great criminal element. The repeal of Prohibition put them both out of a job. The criminals have turned to kidnapping; the reformers turn to movie-reforming. Both are causing us much trouble.

But I must add that no country but America could have staged such a remarkable movie-reform programme as we have now. For the reformers have used—breathe it reverently—science. And again I am conscious that no British audience can feel the American thrill as I write this. For popular science, here, is a god of gods. You may think science abstract or cold. Here it is warm—living among us. The veriest child here knows what science is. It is the thing that howls and yowls to us from radios, placards, newspaper ads., and street-car signs. Science proves that there is only one perfect cigarette, lipstick, auto tyre, floorwax, chewing-gum, deodorant, laxative or roach powder—except every other kind which (by the weird machinations of business men and scientists) comes similarly endorsed. This new and awful bogey of science thrills the American people with fear and sends them madly rushing to buy the latest article. So highly regarded is science in the mass mind to-day that no one pauses to doubt—to see that scientific facts are like bacteria—you can always find one kind that will gobble up the other!

Aware of the bugaboo of science in the lay mind, the most

powerful anti-film workers have employed "science" to show that movies are dire and dreadful. For four years men toiled—men of impeccable reputation—psychologists and criminologists, doctors and professors and nerve specialists. Financed by the Payne Fund, they compiled data and got up their reports. And, armed with these, the Motion Picture Research Council is sweeping the country to action.

The reports of these excellent research specialists cannot be refuted. The nigger in the woodpile, however, is the "presentation of these findings." Thus we find that the *deus ex machina* of this newly powerful Research Council is William H. Short, director. Mr. Short had written a book against movies *before* any of the researches were made—hardly the coldly unprejudiced mind that science considers desirable. And his presentation of facts is interesting. Again, we need psychology, for he exclaims!

Exclaiming out loud is a popular game. It goes like this. I may discover that industrial accidents claim 1,240 lives a year in Pennsylvania. That is cold fact. But notice the difference if I exclaim: "Just think! In this great and sovereign state of ours no less than 1,240 human creatures laid down their lives on the altar of ruthless, mechanized industry, and this in the space of one short year!" You begin to feel that there's something very wrong indeed here—maybe that industry should be abolished to save human life.

Thus the Research Council exclaims. It spent \$200,000 on research. I have before me six well-bound volumes of reports. They bombard one with "scientific facts" such as that 102 of 252 delinquent girls said it was "the movie-made urge" that "landed them in trouble"; that 54 out of 110 inmates of a penal institution said movies gave them a desire to carry a gun; that 23 said "that movies taught them how to fool police"; that male delinquents testified using "certain types of movies as excitants for arousing and stimulating the passions of girls."

But the prize scientific fact of all is that tests showed that after going to movies children had great increase in sleep motility (turning of the body) and that in boys it averaged 26 per cent and girls 14 per cent. The horror of this shows when you learn that a similar sleep motility increase is produced by drinking two cups of coffee. And, while this finding is beyond argument, no one rationalizes it by measuring increased motility on, let us say, Christmas Eve, or after receiving a toy, or after visiting the Zoo. In fact, we might ask if increased movement in sleep is bad? Is all nervous stimulation bad? If so, isn't the polyp the happiest and best of living creatures and should we try to be like him?

But, again, you do not say these facts coldly. You exclaim. Just think! Sleep motility increases 26 per cent after movies.

“Horrors!” the listener answers, “As bad as all that?”

Thus it appears that, while the reform element will often be on the same side of the fence as the film-worker or cineaste; while that element often uses our own words in its own behalf, quoting critics and reviewers to bolster up arguments; really we are not one army.

For the reform movement, in America at least, is but a blind mass surge, a good old public emotional spree mixed with popular indignation, that has no end beyond making an outcry. For, sad as it will seem, the Motion Picture Research Council has no real answer to furtherance of the film. After a recent meeting I asked the President, Mrs. August Belmont, just how she proposed to get decent juvenile films before decent juveniles. There was no plan. Would they work toward a supply of well-made 16 mm. films—for the 16 mm. field awaited such development? “No,” she smiled. “It was a bit disconcerting because I understood those sort of films all had to have different kinds of projectors.” (*Sic.*)

So, the film follower must keep himself still isolated. He can't climb any white horses and ride in any parades. The truth is that all this reform sentiment means no more to films than the art of painting is furthered by that element that would like to go about the world making curators paint panties on the nude figures of canvasses. For they are carping at morals—and, it seems to me, morals have nothing whatever to do with any art and never have had.

All I can think of is that the Payne Fund spent \$200,000 to prove what I or you could have told them without spending a cent: that Hollywood movies are pretty rancid tripe most of the time and not particularly good for weak-minded children or for adults whose physical or mental weaknesses make them prone to criminal life.

For, to do any good for the cinema you've got to love it—and love it for itself alone. And that's the trouble with the reformers. None of them love this poor darned thing made of celluloid. For, if they did, how could they spend \$200,000 on reports? How could they? In fact, how dare they?

Two hundred thousand dollars wasted to prove what we all know—and not one cent for real constructive work: to provide proper films for children.

Oh for that lost \$200,000—so that we could stop caterwauling about what horrible pictures children see, and give them dozens of good ones instead.

BOOKS RECEIVED

AN INNOCENT IN HOLLYWOOD. By Clarence Winchester (London: Cassell. 2s. 6d.). The editor of the “Film Pictorial” gives his readers some more revelations.

THE EYES OF THE MOVIE. By Harry Alan Potamkin (New York: International Publishers. 55 cents.). An attack on the “treacherous re-action of the bourgeois film.”

FILMING IN CEYLON

BASIL WRIGHT

PRODUCTION covered less than three months, of which seven weeks were devoted to almost continuous shooting. Final footage was 23,000 feet and about 1,000 stills were shot on a Leica by my assistant, John Taylor.

Highspots were (*a*) Sri Pada (Adam's Peak)—the world's holiest mountain—for over 2,000 years a centre of pilgrimage in the East. Seven thousand feet high and covered with dense jungle, except for the summit, a great triangle of grey rock on top of which, walled in and covered with a flimsy wooden canopy, is a huge footprint—claimed by various creeds for Buddha, Siva, Adam, St. Thomas, Saman. Chiefly a Buddhist sanctuary. The shrine is reached by a flight of three thousand rock-hewn steps up which the pilgrims (they have counted 18,000 in a day) must climb barefoot. At dawn they worship; and at dawn the Peak casts its famous shadow—a seventy-mile-long triangle which hangs between sky and land, so that from the summit you can look down through it on to the hills and valleys below. We staged our own pilgrimage, taking some fifty Buddhists including old men, women and children, and covered the whole thing in thirty-six hours—including a freezing night in deck-chairs on the summit. The pilgrims were perfect actors, being quite unselfconscious, and wholly immersed in the religious significances of their pilgrimage. As for the shadow—which lasts for about twenty minutes—we put two cameras on it and filmed it at every possible camera speed and exposure. We obtained best results from *f* 5.6, sixteen frames a second, graduated filter K1 to blank; and from *f* 3.5, turning dead slow, with red (Wratten A) filter.

(*b*) The Buried Cities—Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya—whose architectural remains seemed to me as good, if not better, than many of the more famous sights of ancient civilisation. The remains at Polonnaruwa (at its peak in twelfth century, A.D.) ate up some 3,000 feet of film in two days. They built either in rich red brick or in granite. The brick was often covered with thick plaster painted with coloured frescoes. We cleared a patch of jungle away to shoot a forty-foot-long recumbent Buddha—covered with

cobwebs and surrounded by the footprints and droppings of bears. We used 150 square feet of reflectors and shot with a red (Wratten A) filter, thus getting an effect of internal glow on to the carvings and statues. We filmed the same objects at dawn, at midday, at evening. And we could easily have shot the whole 23,000 feet there.

(c) Dancing. Kandyan dancing is an excellent example of primitive movements formalised and classicised by tradition and religion, yet retaining the vigour of prehistoric origin. Like good Orientals they dance with their whole bodies; and they take it seriously. They go into a dancing school as early as four years old, and after twelve years training about two out of every ten are judged good enough to join a troupe. The dresses are elaborate and ceremonially significant. We had the idea of showing our dancers at their ordinary life in the village before revealing them in their more godlike guise, and so we took entire possession of their village for six days. We attempted to shoot not merely for sensational or romantic effect; we aimed also at an analysis of at least three of their dances. In this job again we needed every ounce of light from our reflectors. As we were shooting silent we have had to bring some of the dancers to England for synchronising purposes.

In addition to the big stuff, we filmed many aspects of life in the island, taking wild rushes out to sea in catamarans or shooting more peacefully a rice harvest in a fold of the Uva hills. But in all the shooting our idea, apart from the production of certain one-reelers, was to achieve a co-ordination of all the primary elements of Ceylon into a construction which should carry a conviction, not merely of what Ceylon now superficially is, but of what Ceylon stands for in the line of that vital history which is measured in terms of statues, monuments, religion, and of human activity. It can easily be seen how the inter-relation of our three highspots forms the controlling factor of all the material.

The film is now on the cutting bench, and it is interesting to note that material which, had we shot it last year in the West Indies, would have been a first choice, goes now straight into the waste bin, rejected purely for its externality, its superficiality—in fact, for its documentary remoteness.

The synchronisation of the film will be a problem calling for very solid experimentation in sound technique. But there is no space to go into that here.

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THE FILM ABROAD

ACTIVITY IN BELGIUM

THOUGH film clubs are having a difficult time due to financial stringency and public apathy, another new society, known as Art 7, has been founded in Brussels under the control of a Committee of critics of all opinions. Its performances so far have included revivals of *The Italian Straw Hat*, *Metropolis*, *The Crowd*, as well as two Dutch shorts, Koelinga's *Blind Alley* and Dick Laan's *Football*.

Le Club de l'Ecran, after a period of inactivity, has arranged a further series of performances which have included *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and two other Dutch films, *Profondeur* and *Pubite* by Hans Sluizer—disappointing experiments showing the thorough sterility of super-realism as applied to artistic creation. Equally disappointing is *Ankara*, *Coeur de la Turquie* by Youtkevitch. This reportage of a Soviet delegate's visit to Turkey is even less successful than many American travelogues. In *L'Orage* (The Thunderstorm), however, *Le Club de l'Ecran* produced a good fragment, well coloured, clever realism, lacking variety but with a well sustained rhythm.

An entire evening was devoted to British films produced by the G.P.O. Unit, preceded by a lecture by Stuart Legg. The programme included *Industrial Britain*, *Cargo from Jamaica*, *Cable Ship* and *O'er Hill and Dale*. *Cable Ship* and *Industrial Britain* roused special attention. In the former the image is both perfect and simple, giving charm to a technical subject and a significance approaching symbolism. The latter showed a profound feeling for cinema, though a little too compact for the average spectator, whom the absence of transitions and the rapidity of the cutting seemed to disconcert. At first sight, however, the experiment of the G.P.O. seems decisive and appears like the birth of a truly popular cinema which both the man in the street and the aesthete can appreciate.

Another notable event is the return of Charles de Keukelire from the Congo, to which country he undertook a voyage of discovery with a motor expedition. He has brought back with him much film which he has now begun to put together as a documentary of the many aspects of the great Belgian colony. This is the first experiment of the kind attempted in Belgium.

Carlo Queeckers is also just back from Portugal, where he has been shooting exteriors for *Paiënne*. Other scenes have been shot on the outskirts of Brussels and considerable curiosity has been aroused in this film, which is the first work of an international

character which has been undertaken by a Belgian.

LUDO PATRIS.

DENMARK. *The Bride of Palo*, the documentary film of Greenland on which Knud Rasmussen was at work when he died, has now been completed and edited according to his original script. Reminiscent of Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, it has for its theme the rivalry of two hunters for the hand of an Eskimo girl, and contains stirring scenes of danger and storm. The acting is done entirely by Eskimos and care has been taken to film many of the native rites and customs. The film is proving a popular success in Denmark, and because of its educational value it has been exempted from entertainments tax.

ITALY. World-wide interest is being taken in the great cinema exhibition to be held in Venice during August. Representative films from almost every country will be screened and trophies will be awarded for the best Italian and foreign films and for the best director, scenarist, actor, actress, and photographer. There will also be special awards for the best documentary film and the best animated cartoon. Among the British films expected to be shown are *Don Juan*, *Blossom Time*, *Man of Aran* and *Contact*.

The Melba-esque Venice of moonlight and gondolas is to be "debunked" by a film which Francesco Pasinetti is to direct for Venezia Film from a scenario by P. M. Pasinetti. Venice will be shown as a city of workers and steamers as well as of loungers and palaces.

U.S.A. As a result of the NRA restrictions on block booking American exhibitors now have greater freedom in their choice of pictures. Competition between the independent producers and the large studios has thus been intensified. A stiff fight is in prospect and in an attempt to beat the independents by quantity production one studio alone is planning to put out no fewer than ninety pictures next year.

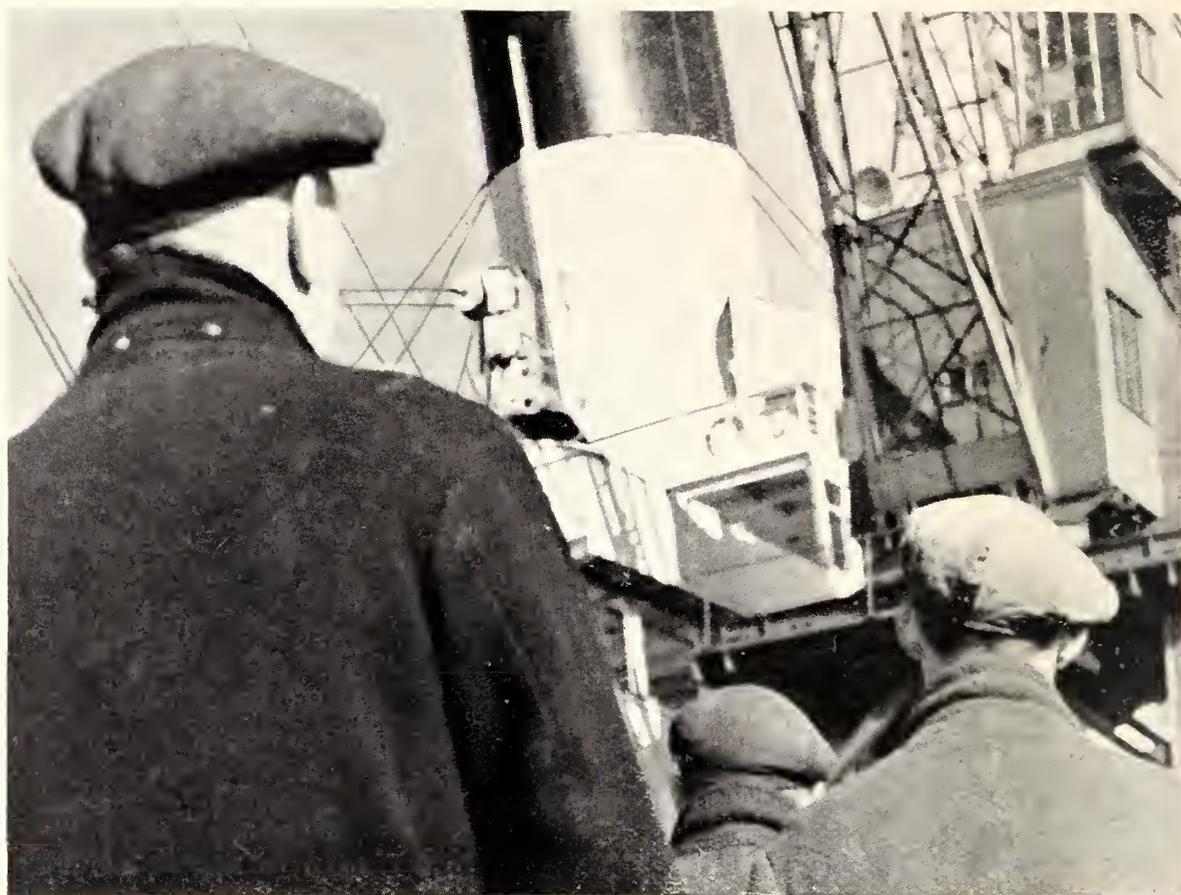
Charles Breasted has produced for the Oriental Institute of Chicago University *The Human Adventure*, a summary of man's rise from primitive life to civilization. A 6,000 miles air journey round the Institute's various expeditions throughout the East gives movement and unity to the survey.

An official film of native tribal life is being made for the Mexican government by Wallace Smith.

AUSTRALIA. Australia does not take its film art seriously. At least not in an organized form. We have no group movements of earnest film students and none are likely to emerge while the present scheme of censorship continues to function. This system



Douglas Fairbanks with Benita Hume in "The Private Life of Don Juan," a new London Film Production completed at Elstree. Direction: Alexander Korda. Photography: Georges Périnal.



From "Rising Tide," a film of the new Southampton Dock, by Paul Rotha. Production: Gaumont-British Instructional. Photography: Pocknall.

Above—Unemployed at the docks.

Below—Charging steel furnaces, from the industrial sequence.



denies the right of entrance to practically all foreign films. Of those reviewed during the past year in *Cinema Quarterly* we haven't seen one. The only film clubs in Australia are The Good Film League and Imperial Film Club. Both exist more or less for the benefit of patriotic British-Australians whose sole desire appears to be to flag-wave and "Boost British." Such organizations spend most of their time demanding a higher standard of films from American producers and then feature at a special screening for club members a British picture based on a bedroom plot in which the hero and heroine indulge in suggestive scenes and *risqué* dialogue. But it is all good clean fun, if it is British! Such clubs can be summarily dismissed so far as being considered as engaging in any attempt even remotely to study film art.

LEON S. STONE.

AUSTRIA. A film acted entirely by gypsies is being made by Fritz Weiss. A special feature will be the playing of genuine traditional music as opposed to the pseudo-gypsy music to which film-goers have become familiar.

FRANCE. Julien Duvivier is to direct for Ichthys Films *Le Golgotha*, a "real life" drama of Calvary written by Joseph Reymond.

René Clair's latest film, in production at Joinville, is entitled *Le Dernier des Milliardaires*. Max Dearly and Marthe Mello are in the cast.

MISCELLANY

CINEMATIC COLOUR

PROBABLY nowhere in Hollywood are the new attributes of the cinema seized upon and applied and perfected with such immediate appreciation of their film values as in the Disney Studio. Forsyth Hardy, in the Spring 1933 Number of *Cinema Quarterly*, lauded the first colour Silly Symphonies of Walt Disney. Since then, Disney and his staff have continued to develop the colour cartoon. Disney is so convinced of the success of his colour cartoons that he may produce Mickey Mouse in colour. Of late he and his co-workers have been evolving a method of giving his Silly Symphonies more depth and perspective by means of cut out foregrounds beneath which the actual animation takes place. But of greater significance to the progress of the colour film has been the introduction of "cinematic colour" into some of the more recent Silly Symphonies.

Cinematic colour (a coined expression) may be defined as colour in the process of changing from one hue to another. The colour in the early Silly Symphonies, as in painting, was static. The colour on the animated figures and on the backgrounds did not change. Mobile colour has been employed in other forms of expression. The theatre offers an obvious example in stage lighting where the dramatic and spectacular possibilities of modulating colour have been often effectively appropriated. But Disney has been the first (as far as the writer is aware) to use changing colour in films.

When the big bad wolf in *Three Little Pigs* blows on the wind-proof brick house until he is exhausted, his face turns first pale, then purple. Here Disney employed cinematic colour as a humorous gag. In *Lullaby Land* the dream of the baby reaches a nightmarish climax in the dance of the smoky bogeys. These figures would have been fantastic and frightening enough with their contortions and shape transformations and strange ejaculations, but their chimeric actions are enormously intensified because their variations in shape are accompanied by changes in colour (dark terrifying green, brown, and purple). In *The Grasshopper and the Ants* Disney used cinematic colour more thoroughly than in any other of his Silly Symphonies. The picture begins in the summer with the land and the grasshopper green. Change in colour with fall. Change in colour with winter. The grasshopper, hungry and cold, becomes pale, and then an icy blue. Saved from freezing to death by the thrifty ants, his blue turns back to green as he is being revived. Cinematic colour thus played a part not only in symbolizing the change in seasons, but in describing the changing physical state of the grasshopper.

The possibilities of cinematic colour in regular motion pictures are endless; however, until realistic colour is more satisfactorily reproduced, Disney has the field to himself.

MACK W. SCHWAB.

THOUGHTS ON MONTAGE

To determine the nature of montage is to solve the specific problem of the film.—Eisenstein in “Experimental Cinema.”

Montage is not an idea recounted by pieces following each other, but an idea that arises in the collision of pieces independent of each other.—Eisenstein in the same article.

Montage is the mathematics of film-construction, the dialectical principles governing the dynamics of film form.—Eisenstein, quoted by Seymour Stern, in the same issue of “Experimental Cinema.”

Montage may be understood as the inclusive, creative and con-

structive unity that is present from the birth of the first gleam of idea in the mind of the scenarist to the final act of assembling the film strips by constructive editing and cutting.—Paul Rotha in “The Film Till Now.”

Montage—The act of assembling material, whether of scenario, of material in the studio or on location, or of the strips of celluloid bearing photographic images during the editing.—Definition by Paul Rotha in “The Film Till Now.”

The only possible English equivalent (of montage) is editing.—Ivor Montagu’s notes on Pudovkin’s “Film Technique.”

The foundation of film art is editing (montage) . . . I repeat that editing is the creative force of film reality.—Pudovkin’s introduction to his “Film Technique.”

Montage is “the logic,” “the structural principle of film-language.”—Pudovkin, quoted by Seymour Stern.

Montage does not mean cutting, although manifestly it cannot be achieved without resort to the physical operation of cutting.—Seymour Stern in the same article.

Montage means joining together shots of situations that occur at different times and in different places.—Rudolf Arnheim in “Film.”

Fifteen principles of montage* :—1. Change of place ; 2. Change of position of the camera ; 3. Change of camera angle ; 4. Stressing of details ; 5. Analytical montage ; 6. Past time ; 7. Future time ; 8. Parellel events ; 9. Contrast ; 10. Association ; 11. Concentration ; 12. Enlargement ; 13. Monodramatic montage ; 14. Refrain ; 15. Montage.—Timoshenko, quoted by Arnheim.

Montage is film editing done constructively.—B. V. Braun in “film art.”

Montage is mechanized imagination.—Herbert Read in *Cinema Quarterly*.

There is no such thing as montage.—G. F. Dalton in *Cinema Quarterly*.
Mounted by G. F. DALTON.

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE HOME CINEMA. By J. P. Laurie (London: Chapman and Hall. 3s. 6d.). An unpretentious guide for the novice. Particular attention is paid to projection, and amateurs are sensibly advised to avoid Hollywood subjects for filming.

THE CENSOR, THE DRAMA, AND THE FILM, 1900—1934. By Dorothy Knowles (London: Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.) *For Review in next issue.*

MANUAL OF LAW FOR THE CINEMA TRADE. By Gordon Alchin. (London: Pitman. 30s.) *For Review in next issue.*

*Compare the traditional classification of eggs :—

1. New-laid eggs ; 2. Fresh eggs ; 3. Eggs ; 4. Eggs for election purposes.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

DECENT DOCUMENTS

FORSYTH HARDY

AN ATTEMPT to trace a serious social purpose in the manifestations of the commercial movie is merely mis-spent energy. Behind every social document there must be a sincere and solid purpose to give it perspective and point of view. Behind the commercial film there is no greater purpose than to swell the tinkle at the box-office till. Basil Wright once put the point neatly when writing of *I Am a Fugitive*, that exciting exposure of penitentiary conditions in the Southern States. Sensing the absence from the film of the fundamental decency of sincerity, he suggested that "the reason after all, for lavishing cash on this production was not primarily a burning desire to rid the U.S.A. of one of its myriad plague-spots ; it was simply that the story was sensational enough to draw box-office cash in excess of studio expenditure." The conditions under which the commercial cinema operates make it not so much difficult as unnecessary to produce decent documents of the life of the people. When such films as *The World Changes*, *Gabriel Over the White House*, *The Mayor of Hell* and *Golden Harvest* appear, we ought not merely to reject them for the underlying insincerity of their purpose, but recognize and record that they are preferable alternatives to *Hips Hips*, *Hooray!* *Merry Wives of Reno* and *Bottoms Up!* They become interesting when they attempt to do something more ambitious than provide a variant on the formula of the guy and the girl and who-gets-who. But it would be idle to magnify these chance accidents of production into something as large and important as a serious application to a social purpose.

It is necessary to make this point in order to place the major films of the quarter in their proper perspective. The case of *Man of Aran* is discussed by Ralph Bond and I need not elaborate. *Man of Aran*, as he points out, breaks the fundamental documentary principle of "the creative treatment of actuality." All that Flaherty has stood for in cinema, all his fine achievement amidst an unfriendly film world, led us to expect a restrained if romantic record of the life of a people, significantly selective in detail and appreciative of the nuances of common feeling. To a certain extent, of course, the film successfully reflects the life of the islanders: any other result would surely be impossible after some two years of filming on the islands; but for too much of its length is *Man of Aran* concerned with

Dita Parlo and Lucas Gridoux
in "Rapt," a Swiss film
directed by Dmitri Kirsanov.



From "Unfinished Symphony,"
directed by Willi Forst. An
Austrian film, based on the
Schubert romance.





Marlene Dietrich and John Lodge in "The Scarlet Empress" (Paramount), directed by Josef von Sternberg. Photography: Bert Glennon.

sensational incidents which are unjustified when not set against a natural background to give them perspective. The Flaherty of *Nanook* and *Moana* is the last person from whom we expected box-office sensationalism. Nor is it easy to accept the explanation, passed on by C. A. Lejeune, that *Man of Aran* is but a trailer for a longer film. If the real story of Aran is "the fight to hold the land against eviction," and "the windjammers in the big seas off the islands, where the Armada broke," why did Flaherty spend so much time and energy in recording with painstaking elaboration two storms at sea and a tussle with a shark? If his purpose, according to the "trailer" explanation, was "to pique our curiosity," he might have assessed more highly our powers of anticipation. With infinite regret—for Flaherty represented the one hope of carrying documentary into the wider field of the picture houses—we must write off *Man of Aran* as a beautiful essay in box-office sensationalism with little more significance than if it had been produced from purely box-office motives.

Viva Villa represents another attempt by the film-makers to record something of the life of a people on the screen ; and, whatever the film's shortcomings, we prefer an ambitious to a dormant Hollywood. There was always less chance of this succeeding as a social document than of *Man of Aran*. Flaherty did not have the film star to contend with and there was in his approach more than a germ of sincerity ; but behind *Viva Villa* there was but the keen commercial force of M.G.M. and the film is not insensitive to the influences which were brought to bear on it. It is a rapid, rousing entertainment, a spectacle and an excitement which, despite all its picturesque finery and sentimental trappings, will rouse a stronger feeling of protest against oppression than did *Thunder over Mexico*.

Here, as in *The House of Rothschild*, the presence of protest gives the theme a compelling urge : what might have been a paltry pageant of the past becomes a modern pamphlet with a vigorous message. Superficially *The House of Rothschild* is the story of the rise to power of the famous banking house which gained control of European finance at the time of the Napoleonic wars, and especially of Nathan Rothschild, whose loan to the Allies before Waterloo secured freedom from oppression and equality of trading for the Jewish people. But we do not miss the significance of Nathan Rothschild's appeal for his people or fail to see in the threatening figures of Metternich and Ledrantz, the forces of Hitler and Goebbels. The producer, Darryl Zanuck, does not seek to hide his aim : "I have found that the best way to tell a timely story is to take material a hundred years old. It prevents literal-minded people from making narrow objections on petty grounds. And it leaves everyone free to make whatever parallels with the present day he likes." The

film makes an eloquent and persuasive protest against political tyranny and racial prejudice. There are no half-tones in the propaganda : the Jew is shown as excessively righteous, with the ghost of the moneylender afar off, while the Ledrantz of Boris Karloff is a blood-and-thunder villain, without intelligence. This is at once the strength and the weakness of the film : strength in its use of cinema as a direct plea for the rehabilitation of German Jewry ; weakness in its unbalanced attitude and sentimental belief in the inevitably virtuous Jew. George Arliss has his most worth-while part since *Disraeli* and for once the film is allowed to have an existence apart from his own performance.

Not many of the other films of the quarter escape the conventional categories. Like *Rotha*, I find Rowland Brown's *Blood Money* exciting and significant, a vigorous analysis of the curious moralities of the American underworld. There is something vital in Brown's compact and compelling methods which Sternberg never achieves with his finicking, fluttering filming in *The Scarlet Empress*. Sternberg has succumbed to the numbing influences of Hollywood while Brown has fought for his independence. G. W. Pabst does not appear to have been successful in retaining his freedom of expression in Hollywood. In *A Modern Hero*, his adaptation of Louis Bromfield's novel, there is little to suggest the director of *Kameradschaft* and *Don Quixote*. Significantly it is dismissed in a trade paper as a "Safe popular booking, especially for star fans" ! The star is not of course, the director. Among the quarter's other novels adapted as films is *All Men Are Enemies*, which retains the title but little of significance from Richard Aldington's novel. Meanwhile revue films remain steady, with *Murder at the Vanities* a feature, while support is appearing for animal films, Frank Buck's *Wild Cargo* participating prominently in the movement.

With the exception of *Man of Aran* and *Wings Over Everest*, there are no notable British films of the quarter, though *Jew Suss*, *Chu Chin Chow* and *The Private Life of Don Juan* suggest interesting achievement on the way. *The Secret of the Loch* is a melodramatic account of what is regarded in Scotland as something more than a popular superstition or mass halucination. The elusiveness of the subject has up till now made a documentary difficult.

Among the foreign films, which have come mostly from France, notable are *Rapt*, an adaptation of the novel by C. F. Ramuz, *La Séparation des Races*, directed by Dmitri Kirsanov with music by Honegger ; *Crainquebille*, a modern version by Jacques de Baroncelli of the Anatole France story filmed some ten years ago by Jacques Feyder ; and *The Loves of Ariane*, a censored version of the early Czinner-Bergner film released now in order to profit from the popularity of the star of *Catherine the Great*.

MAN OF ARAN

*Production: Gainsborough. Direction and Photography: Robert Flaherty.
Scenario and Editing: John Goldman. Music: John Greenwood.
Distributors: Gaumont-British. Length, 7,047 feet.*

ESCAPISM is a disease common to the commercial film. Remoteness from or distortion of reality is the hall-mark of almost all box-office pictures. Movie, as a consequence, reflects a world totally at variance with the experience of the great mass of people. Documentary is, or should be, something different. It takes fact and experience, discovers and brings out the essential drama in lives and events, avoids sensationalism and sticks closely to the truth.

Which brings us to *Man of Aran*. Probably no Flaherty film has been so eagerly awaited. Newspaper film critics had fed us with lively stories of the two years spent by Flaherty in Aran, and the rumour merchants had been busy with tales of gigantic achievements in the making. So we were all nicely keyed up for the first night at the New Gallery and even managed to endure the massed band of the Irish Guards. The men of Aran were there in force, having spent many busy weeks in London recording the sound track, being photographed in odd corners and even making personal appearances.

We were rewarded with a film which for photographic beauty has rarely been equalled. There is no doubting Flaherty's genius for dramatizing the conflict between man and Nature. The storm scenes in the opening and closing sequences reveal Flaherty cutting at its best. But two storms and a shark hunt do not make a picture and we are more concerned with what Flaherty has left out than with what he has put in. For here we come up against the element of escapism. *Man of Aran* is escapist in tendency, more so probably than any previous Flaherty production. Flaherty would have us believe that there is no class struggle on Aran, despite ample evidence to the contrary. There is a sequence in the film showing the islanders scraping for precious drops of soil in the rock crevices, but no mention, as Ivor Montagu said in the "Daily Worker," of the absentee landlords who sent men to tear down their huts and scatter their soil, in default of payment for things they had made themselves.

If Flaherty lived on the islands for two years he must have known these things. Why then, does he not tell us about them? Why does he merely present us with the spectacle of a handful of islanders (out of a population of twelve hundred) waging incessant war against the fury of the sea? We must assume that he is a romantic idealist striving to escape the stern and brutal realities of life, seeking ever to discover some back-water of civilization untouched by the problems

and evils affecting the greater world outside. But his field is being narrowed down: the back-waters themselves reflect, on a smaller scale it is true, these very problems and evils. Nowhere in the world can we escape the realities of life—the struggle of man not only against Nature but against land sharks and capitalist exploitation, and the poverty and slavery that goes with it. Thus Flaherty's world is a world of dreams; it exists only in his imagination. Unfortunately, fairy tales, however beautiful and artistic, have nothing to do with documentary.

Flaherty has not only concealed the existence of the class struggle on Aran. He (or Gaumont-British) has gone all out for box-office sensationalism. We are led to believe that the men in the shark hunt faced fearful dangers, whereas the sharks in these waters are comparatively harmless creatures. A small boat rides through a sea so gigantic that no ordinary boat could live in it for five minutes. And so on. Very little is seen of the life on the island itself and nothing of the island customs, traditions and ceremonies. It is one more example of the Barnum method of beating the big drum furiously on the principle that the more noise you make the better must the picture be.

It is all rather tragic—for Aran has all the makings of a superb documentary film. But then perhaps, Gaumont-British would not have been so interested. . . .

RALPH BOND.

OCTOBER (10 Days)

Production: Sovkino. Direction: S. M. Eisenstein. Photography: Edouard Tissé. Scenario: Alexandrov. Art Direction: V. I. Kovrigin. Distribution: Film Society. Length: 13,000 feet (approx.).

THIS film held me absorbed throughout the entire thirteen reels and it was not until some hours later that my critical senses re-asserted themselves. In its conception and in its realization, the film is so tremendous that it deserves more than passing notice. It is of course silent, though a musical score was composed by Meisel and played at the Film Society show. The music was bad and continually at war with the film; it seemed cheap and tinny compared with the greatness of the film unreeling itself above.

The film covers the period from February to November, 1917, the collapse of the Tsarist government, the coming and going of the Kerensky Provisional Government, the fight between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks (with the Trotsky share carefully expunged) and the final establishment of the Soviets. A great theme that has been greatly expressed.



From "Wheatfields in East Anglia," an educational film, produced by Gaumont-British Instructional and directed by Mary Field. Photography: Pocknall.



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There have been all kinds of criticism directed against the film; its symbols were cheap, its cutting obvious, etc. It should be remembered that the film was made in 1927. Then, its technique was revolutionary. But though there may be symbolism that we have since rejected, bad photography, cheap effect cutting, they are all as nothing beside the realisation of a great conception. All the good looks in the world are not going to make a film. What matters is the content, the theme. Beautiful photography, smooth direction are worthless, (*vide Viva Villa*) if there is no theme behind the picture, if no thought has gone to the making of it.

There is such a wealth of virtues in the film that it is difficult to isolate individual sequences for consideration. Perhaps the raising of the bridge is the greatest individual piece of cutting in the film. Nothing inanimate on the screen yet has been so supercharged with idea as that bridge. Never has the cinema been used so effectively for satire as in the Kerensky episode. Satire is not achieved inside the frame, but by relation, by movie methods. The economy of shots Eisenstein uses to create an effect should be a lesson to movie directors. There are places in which the film sags, particularly when Eisenstein uses twenty minutes of screen time to express the twenty minutes before the Bolsheviks took over the revolution. The sequence in the Tsarina's bedroom is masterly; the young sailor is momentarily affected by the visible symbols of royalty and the conquering of tradition in his mind is superbly suggested.

This film is the work of a master, one of the few directors who have left an indelible stamp on the work of film producers all over the world.

D. F. TAYLOR.

BLOOD MONEY

Production: 20th Century. Written and Directed by Rowland Brown. Photography: J. Van Trees. Distribution: United Artists. Length: 5,740 feet.

ROWLAND BROWN has probably gone nearer to presenting a logical social explanation of the racket system of business in America than any other movie director, and despite the mawling of hirelings *Blood Money* gets across a sincere expression of social feeling. As a picture, it parades most of the familiar ingredients of the stereotyped box-office subject. It is patent that Brown has written a movie story which he knew would prove acceptable to the mentalities of the picture business, yet which at the same time allowed him a little freedom for his own outlook. Hence we get an admirable interpretation of a millionaire's daughter (from Frances Dee of all

people!) with a leaning towards kleptomania and a more-than-leaning towards the physical stimulus of men as far removed from her own social set as are her father's ideas of business from the South Sea Islands which he exploits for his millions. The high-spot climax, including a last-minute rescue, is in the true Griffith tradition and as old as cinema itself, but because of its grand cutting and use of sound, gets across on a modern audience better than anything else of its kind that I have seen this year. At more leisurely moments, such as the parting scene between the bond-bailiff and his woman, Brown reveals a hitherto unsuspected tenderness of direction which probably arises from his complete understanding of the mentalities of the types that he is portraying. Many small touches will bring admiration for the man's intelligence; for example, the departmental-store chief's air-cushion and the releasing of the greyhounds at the race track. Almost every shot and certainly every line of dialogue has point and needs watching. Eight hundred feet are removed from this English version. From what is left, you will judge Brown as a first-rate director awaiting freedom of story and treatment and a square production deal.

PAUL ROTH.

VIVA VILLA

Production and Distribution : Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Direction : Jack Conway. Photography : James Wong Howe. Dialogue : Ben Hecht. With Wallace Beery, Fay Wray, Stuart Erwin, Leo Carrillo, H. B. Walthall. Length 9,862 feet.

The Eisenstein influence lingers on in Hollywood. Not only directly inspired in theme by *Thunder Over Mexico*, *Viva Villa* in addition repeats a great many of the actual set-ups from the Eisenstein film. It purports to be the story of the Mexican peons' attempt to free themselves. Unfortunately for the realisation of the film, the Americans could not rid themselves of the idea that Mexicans are white "niggers" and as such, figures of low comedy, or "bad hombres," and as such figures of cowboy melodrama. They have conceived the Mexican fight for independence on the lines of a Western with all the attendant plot circumstances we know so well. The film must have been a headache for M.G.M. The only way they could avoid the great social issues involved was to convert the revolution into cowboy gunfights and to concentrate on personalities. Consequently the whole film fails as a social document; revolutionary ideals become purposeless when there are no causes.

Compare this film with *October*—in the two films there are similar themes—and you will see the wide gulf which separates the social

film from the entertainment film. Symbols such as a hand clutching a piece of earth become merely sentimental patriotism, the oppression of people becomes just another high spot. The actors wade through lathers of cheap American sentimentality; the leading of a revolution is degraded to the posturing of movie stars. Pancho Villa is played by Beery as a villain with a heart of gold beneath a rugged exterior; he alternates between slobbering mawkishness and brutal half-wittedness. All the stock situations and characters are grafted on to a theme that should have swept outside personalities into the larger heroisms of mass action. Leo Carrillo as Villa's assistant is the only character in the film. Dialogue, by Ben Hecht, is first rate. Production is very uneven, with the camerawork better than the Mexican Tissé.

The film ends leaving everything fine in Mexico, and there is not a word about the peons of whom so much was heard in the earlier reels, not a word about their continued exploitation by business interests. Comparison with *October* should prove interesting and should go further to convince those at the crossroads of cinema that the film is not an art nor an entertainment, but an instrument of propaganda.

D. F. TAYLOR.

SCARLET EMPRESS

Production and Distribution: Paramount. Direction: Josef von Sternberg. Photography: Bert Glennon. With Marlene Dietrich, John Lodge, Sam Jaffe, Louise Dresser. Length, 8,806 feet.

SELDOM has there been a picture so reminiscent of other pictures. Almost every scene brings thoughts of Lubitsch, Stroheim, Dupont, Garmes, Mamoulian and even the surrealist Bunuel; inasmuch that this glamorous, sadistic fabrication appears one long procession of derivative ideas. Yet you cannot help laughing at Sternberg for his undisguised showman's tactics, his fake artistic clap-trap and his succulent debaucheries of photographic slickness; although here he is a Sternberg far removed from the simple days of *Salvation Hunters* and *Docks of New York*. Experience has taught him extravagance. Not one candle but a thousand; not one honest-to-god rape but a skilfully staged scene of perversion. He has reached that delectable state of ecstasy when he can throw away a twenty-five hundred dollar shot on a two-foot wipe and never move a muscle. Decadence indeed.

Comparison with Korda's *Catherine the Great* is as inevitable as it is instructive, and it is diverting to inspect two directors' handling of similar situations. Whereas the Korda-Czinner approach was gentle

and courteous, Sternberg's is brutal and exaggerated, revealing the effect of local environment on production. Sternberg's colossus contains every vice of the Hollywood firmament yet still contrives to achieve a more persuasive atmosphere than Korda's restraint and accuracy. But Dietrich's Catherine falls in the chocolate-box class whereas Bergner, although miscast, brought at least a cultured ability to her playing. A word must be said for the continuity which moves with tremendous pace of visuals and a clashing of bells and fanfares of trumpets. If you can stomach the gross over-acting, the monstrous leering background and the superficial direction, you may find moments of interest even though it requires a mounted Dietrich leading a cavalry charge up the palace staircase to the accompaniment of the Valkyrie Ride to stir you. Glennon's photography is luscious and the sound tempestuous.

PAUL ROTH.

WINGS OVER EVEREST (*British. G.—B.*). This record of the Houston Mount Everest Flight is unique among the quarter's documentaries. It provides us with views seen by no man other than the four flyers. In the film the material taken on the two flights over Everest and the one over Kanchenjunga has been combined and the shots of the Roof of the World, of Everest among its seventy sister-peaks, of the mass of icy mountains rising into the sky, have a value and impressiveness which would withstand the most indifferent presentation. There are certainly shortcomings in treatment: prolonged sequences describing preparations; an artificially filmed interlude depicting an accident to the cameraman; and an unconvincing suggestion that the construction of two aeroplanes affected the unemployment figures in Britain. But these are offset by the economical handling of the Indian sequences, the reproduction of the modest and workmanlike character of the expedition and the effective restraint of Lord Clydesdale's comments after the flight: "Did you get there?" A nod. "What's it like?" "All right." We forget any previous shortcomings in the magnificence of the Everest sequences. Two shots are outstanding: the panorama across the mountain tops, with Everest and Makalu in the distance; and the comparative close-up of the north-east ridge by which the climbers have made their approaches to the crest. S. R. Bonnett's camerawork is consistently fine and the commentary does no obtrude. An important and impressive addition to the growing group of Everest pictures.

F.H.

GUIDE TO FILM-GOING

THE BATTLE (*French. Gaumont-British*). An English version of a French film adapted from Claude Farrere's novel and directed by Nicolas Farkas, cameraman on *Don Quixote*. An artificial quality mars the melodrama but the spectacular battle scenes are authentic and Farkas ensures that the film is always interesting pictorially. Charles Boyer in Sessue Hayakawa's part and Merle Oberon act with strength and sincerity.

BLACK MAGIC (*German. British Lion*). A folk tale of the Malayan island of Bali, directed by Friedrich Dalsheim and Victor von Plessing, with native music and dialogue. A naïve story of primitive superstition gives the film unity and allows for a fascinating description of life on the island, with its striking religious ceremonial and curious trance dances. Finely photographed, exciting to listen to and put together with a sound sense of documentary.

CRAINQUEBILLE (*French*). The veteran Baroncelli's sound version of Anatole France's story, done as a notable silent by Feyder. It has atmosphere and observation, good characterisation and humour, although cinematically it is slow going. A Starevitch puppet sequence is clumsily inserted, striking the wrong note for such a dream sequence which Feyder achieved so well in *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*.

CRIME ON THE HILL (*British. B.I.P.*). A murder mystery of familiar type, interesting for the distinctive treatment of Bernard Vorhaus, a director rapidly attaining a position of importance in the studios. A film full of technical ingenuities is directed with a sincerity rare in British pictures.

DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY (*American. Paramount*). A moving and impressive adaptation of Alberto Casella's play describing in psychological terms the events of three days spent on earth by Death in search of the source of mortal fear among men. Mitchell Leisen's exceptionally sensitive direction and the carefully controlled performances of an able cast secure a compelling expression of the author's theme, to whose peculiar qualities the film proves more sympathetic than the stage. After a whirlwind opening new to the play, movement dwindles but the theme does not become lost in a welter of words. A sincere gesture by Hollywood towards a more intelligent cinema.

EMPEROR JONES (*American. United Artists*). Theatrically conceived, naïvely directed, Paul Robeson's personality surmounts Dudley Murphey's amateurish handling of this O'Neill subject and in flashes reveals the tremendous screen presence that one day he may achieve.

IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT (*American. Columbia*). Frank Capra, most skilful of Hollywood's craftsmen, expends his talent in telling vivaciously and ingeniously the story of a tenacious reporter who, to secure a scoop, follows a runaway heiress across America in a transcontinental bus. An overlong account is kept entertaining through Capra's persuasive direction and the interpolation of several quite brilliantly observed sequences of which the hitch-hiking episode is the chief. Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable.

PECHEUR D'ISLANDE (*French. Beacon*). A stagey adaptation by Pierre Guerlais of Pierre Loti's novel, descriptive of the hardships endured by the Breton fisherfolk. A director out of sympathy with his medium has handled the story as if it were a stage play: people emote in front of the camera and talk endlessly. Some of the incidental shots are lovely, the atmosphere of the fishing village is effectively conveyed and there is a fine performance by Yvette Guilbert.

PRENEZ GARDE A LA PEINTURE (*French. Beacon*). The French version of the original play on which "The Late Christopher Bean" is based, directed by Henri Chomette, who is more successful than was Hollywood in retaining the wit and subtlety of René Fauchois's conception. The mentality of the French bourgeois family is effectively represented and Charlotte Clasis's interpretation of the dead painter's mistress is a moving performance.

TWENTIETH CENTURY (*American. Columbia*). A super-charged performance by John Barrymore in an ingeniously satirical adaptation of "Napoleon of Broadway," depicting the clash of wills between a grotesquely temperamental stage producer and the star he creates but cannot control. Written with a malicious sense of humour by Charles MacArthur and Ben Hecht and resourcefully directed by Howard Hawks.

UNFINISHED SYMPHONY (*Austrian*). Sweet nonsense along familiar lines of Schubert's romance treated with sentimental direction and sincere playing. Nothing is achieved, nothing is lost, but it is a picture which disarms attack and thwarts defence by its sheer softness.

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ANOTHER C.Q. SERVICE FOR READERS

FILM SOCIETIES

BEFORE next season commences it is expected that several new societies will have commenced operations. Aberdeen will have a Film Guild, of which the Hon. Secretary is J. M. Mitchell, 70, High Street, Old Aberdeen. In Ipswich a Film Society is being organized by Gordon C. Hales, 36 Constable Road, Ipswich. An Inverness Film Society is also proposed and communications should be sent to John Mitchell, Royal Bank Buildings, Inverness. Before long similar societies are hoped to be functioning in Bristol, Bo'ness, and Dunfermline.

As always, the help and advice of *Cinema Quarterly* are at the service of the movement, and anyone wishing to form a local film society is welcome to apply for any information that may be required.

Cinema Quarterly Film Service, of which particulars will be found on another page, has been founded as the result of numerous requests received at this office from film societies, educational bodies, clubs and institutes, and is an attempt to simplify the somewhat harassing problem of film supply with which all organisers of special performances are faced. Member societies of the Federation of British Film Societies, of course, will continue to book through the Federation those films for which it makes special arrangements. The *Cinema Quarterly* Service, so far as it concerns the film societies, is intended to supplement the Federation's arrangements and will no doubt be found of great convenience in the booking of films which, though rented through the usual trade channels, often entail prolonged negotiations.

THE FILM SOCIETY, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1. April 15th. *La Vie D'Un Fleuve*. Two French publicity films. *Pirates du Rhone*. *Mail*. *Crainquebille*. May 6th. *Film Favourites No. 1*. *Das Testament von Dr. Mabuse*.

CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY has been formed to provide carefully selected programmes of films for children. The first group is operating in connection with the Everyman, Hampstead, and is under the direction of J. S. Fairfax-Jones, G. F. Noxon, and C. Lawson-Reece. It arranges matinees on lines similar

to these given in past seasons by the Edinburgh Film Guild. The subscription for six shows is 10s.; guest tickets 2s. 6d.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY, 51 High Street, Croydon. April 15th. *Uberfall* (Film Soc.). *Pacific 231* (Film Soc.). *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). *Cable Ship* (G.P.O.). *En Natt* (A.P.D.). April 29th. *Trader Mickey* (United). *Is Gretna Green?* (G.-B.). *Ballet Aida* (Filmophone). *Rain* (Film Soc.). *Tempest* (G.-B.).

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD, 17 S. St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh, 2. Mar. 25th. Two Paramount News-reels. *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). *Granton Trawler* (G.P.O.). *Island of Perils* (Wardour). *Finding His Voice* (West. Elec.). *Tabu* (Paramount). April 8th. *County of the White Rose* (Film. Soc.). *Schufftan Shots* (Process Prod.). *Harlequin* (Film Soc.). *Tonende Handschrift* (Film Soc.). *La Maternelle* (Film Soc.). April 20th. General Meeting. *White Hell of Pitz Palu* (Pathescope, sub-standard).

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY. Vaughan College, Leicester. March 17th. *Paris Markets* (Film Soc.). *Canterbury* (G.-B.). *La Maternelle* (Film Soc.). May 11th. General Meeting. *Fall of the House of Usher*. *Rein que les Heures*.

MAIDSTONE FILM SOCIETY has completed a successful first season with a comfortable financial balance. The final performance on April 15th. included *The Five Year Plan*, *Fifteenth October*, and *Doss House*.

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY, 29 Liverpool Street, Salford. April 21st. *Zuyderzee Werks* (Film Soc.) *Carmen* (Film Soc.). *Zuts' Cartoon* (Film Soc.). *Potemkin* (Arcos). This society is at present converting a disused basement into an experimental studio and projection theatre.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool. April 13th. *Captain of Coepenick* (Film Soc.). *Hungarian Dance* (Filmophone). A short documentary. Disney Cartoon. May 8th. Talk by Ingram Knowles on the Amateur Film-Maker. May 15th. F. Wilkinson on the Film in Education. As this society finds difficulty in obtaining suitable films for its special shows the policy in regard to future shows is at present under review.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY. April 29th. *Upstream* (G.P.O.). *Mascot* (Electa). *Building a Building* (United). *Bed and Sofa* (Arcos). May 13th. *Cargo from Jamaica* (G.P.O.). *Windmill in Barbados* (G.P.O.). *Mickey's Choo Choo* (United). *Carmen* (Film Soc.). *Hans Westmar*. May 27th. *Un Monastère* (Film Soc.). *Charlemagne*. June 10th. *Turbulent Timber* (G.-B.). *Busy Beavers* (United). *Noah's Ark* (United). *Ekstase* (Film Soc.).

TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY, Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle, has completed a successful first season, which has included private Sunday performances, children's shows, and lectures. Next season will open with an exhibition of stills and it is hoped that film work with children will be further developed.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

G. R. CLARK. One of the G.P.O. Film Unit.

JOHN GRIERSON. At present supervising production of a film for the B.B.C.

C. R. JONES. Film student associated with several amateur productions.

ERIC M. KNIGHT. Film editor of the "Philadelphia Public Ledger."

HELEN SCHOENI. A New York journalist who has made a study of Russian cinema.

BERTHOLD VIERTTEL. Director of *The Wig*, *Nora* and *Adventures of a Ten-Mark Note* in Germany of *The Wise Sex* and *The Man from Yesterday* in Hollywood; and of *Little Friend* for Gaumont-British at Shepherd's Bush.

BASIL WRIGHT. A member of the G.P.O. Film Unit. Engaged on cutting material brought from Ceylon.

THE

INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER

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IFMA

THE IFMA has two very definite functions. The first of these, that of providing information and advice, is working overtime. This is as it should be. The second function is to collect information from members about their work and plans and to make this information available to other members.

At first sight this may seem superfluous; actually it is not. Every amateur is always coming up against difficulties in the surmounting of which he acquires knowledge which can be of very definite use to others.

To co-ordinate this information a Bulletin will shortly be issued to be followed by others at intervals of three months unless enough news is received to warrant a more frequent issue.

The IFMA will be glad to receive notes about your work for publication in this Bulletin. It may be a technical trick that you have discovered or it may be an appeal for information about a location or a subject for a script. Please look upon this Bulletin as an opportunity to express yourself on any subject connected with the cinema.

SUMMER SCHOOL

Plans for the summer school have been completed and full particulars will appear in the first Bulletin. It is to be held at Digswell Park, Welwyn, the first week-end in August. All the advisers have given their provisional consent to attend the school. One of them will take out a working party. Another criticise member's films. Another will bring down a film he has made and give a talk on it.

So many members have intimated their intention of being present that the Association would like to make its final arrangements for accommodation as soon as possible. A limited number of non-members will be accepted (on payment of a small supplementary fee), but application must be made immediately.



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MEMBERS' FILMS

S. B. CARTER has made some publicity films for the National Farmers' Union Mutual Insurance Society to show farmers the benefits obtainable by taking out an insurance policy. There were three of these films and it was interesting to see how the director's grasp had become firmer with each succeeding film. Although they cannot be said to be completely successful they do give the impression that he will eventually achieve a style of his own, a style which will be all the better for having sprung from him and not from outside.

H. HOMER has a film taken on two cruising holidays. Here the director had been swept from place to place too quickly to allow of more than a fragmentary impression to be obtained. Witness his handling of the Kiel canal—here he had more time and the result was excellent. His atmosphere shots were particularly good. Some early morning shots of sea across stretches of sand and two or three shots in an Italian village were very lovely.

For review in next issue.—L. Broadbent's film of the Channel Isles.

H. Compton-Bennet's *Down She Goes*, a film on tree-felling, and extracts from work in progress: provisional title, *Black Daisies*. Peter Le Neve Foster's *A Movie Maker in Moscow*.



THE IFMA has taken over the scenario service which was run by *Cinema Quarterly*. There are several scripts available for production by amateurs. Three are by Jay Leyda who is now working for G.I.K. in the U.S.S.R. His film *A Bronx Morning* has been shown by many of the film societies.

LESLIE BEISIEGEL is at work on several scripts and would be pleased to hear from any member with a view to co-operating.

DORSET AMATEUR FILM PRODUCTIONS is making a publicity film of Weymouth. It will be shot during the summer and is scheduled to finish by October when it will be available on loan. This society is also making a film called *Control* which deals with the making and control of robots.

WILL anyone possessing a 9.5 mm. printer and willing to co-operate with another member kindly communicate with the Hon. Secretary?

AMATEUR FILMS AT VENICE.

THE Cine Club Venezia has been entrusted to organize an exhibition of sub-standard films for *La Biennale d'Arte* at Venice in August. Suitable awards will be made for the best films submitted. Independent Film-makers and other amateurs who have films of an unusual or experimental nature which they would like to enter should communicate immediately with Dr. Francesco Pasinetti, San Polo 2196, Venice, Italy.

EXPERIMENT FOR AMATEURS

FILMS TO MUSIC

G. R. CLARK

TOWARDS the close of the silent era, directors were beginning to put considerable store upon the accompaniments to their films. They were no longer content with the patchwork arrangements that local bandsmen turned out from the theatre repertoire, and were coming to realise the importance of a complete score written specially for the picture. A number of commissions went out to accredited composers and Edmund Meisel responded with excellent scores for *Potemkin*, *October* and *The Blue Express*. In Britain, no lesser man than Goossens was responsible for the music for *The Constant Nymph*, while Reisenfeld in America was giving his attention to spectacles like *Ben Hur*. For the first time an intelligent liaison was being created between picture and sound.

With the coming of talking machinery however, directors discarded music and pinned their faith in the spoken word, vaguely believing that speech was a better means of holding attention than the musical scale. But with the inevitable exhaustion accruing from incessant speech, the pendulum is to-day swinging back again and there are signs of returning sanity. Quite recently we have had the commendable efforts of Dr. Becce in the Riefenstahl pictures and in the exciting Ufa short, *Steel*. *White Smoke* is particularly interesting for the telling use of *leit-motif*. The score is built round a short phrase—the love theme—played at the outset by horns. This is developed as the film progresses together with secondary subjects. Towards the end the orchestral texture becomes more and more involved, coincident with the image, and in the final working out, when the orchestra bursts into a joyful dance measure, an added intensity is given to the visual climax.

It may be argued that this is not a very original use of sound, nor that it breaks any new ice so far as sound and picture is concerned. Nevertheless it is important in that it endeavours to effect a definite unity between the visual and the aural. It tries to link a sequence of events together, not by their associable sounds, but by a musical substance possessing an individual quality apart from the picture. It gives a double image and an added point to the argument of the picture, though it is worked out according to its particular canons. It is possible to visualise a future cinema in which the

director is no longer a snipper of celluloid, but a composer who develops his script concurrently with his score, and conceives his film, not as a series of images alone, but with a complementary counterpoint of sound. This sound may not be music alone. It may be the crash of machinery, the battering of pneumatic drills, the howl of the wind, or the cry of a new-born child. It may in fact be any of the myriad sounds that are part and parcel of our daily life. The vocabulary of music itself may be expanded and instruments made to produce visual notes far removed from concert practice. But the director-composer will have to exercise his power of selecting angle, distance and composition in the same way as he did pictorially. He may orchestrate his final sound band with completely synthetic tone by means of distortion, dissolving and superimposition of note upon note.

It is in this direction that the amateur may experiment. The arrival of sound probably dissuaded him from any attempts at synchronisation, and until the cost of sound recording comes within practical limit, he has no doubt regarded silent films as his only means of expression. But there exists a vast field of recorded music for him to explore, from which he can extract material for the synchronisation of his pictures, the only outlay being the cost of the records. And besides music there are effects records from which can be built up extremely interesting accompaniments. And to-day it is possible to have re-recorded any particular parts of records that are chosen, so that the complete accompaniment to a reel may be contained on one disc.

And for those that are musically minded there is great scope for writing original scores for their films. It is nearly always possible to find two or three people at least who are capable of playing an instrument of some description, and the music for the complete film can be recorded at small cost. In this way a doubly interesting form of expression exists. But whatever the amateur may do, he is safe in the knowledge that he is not denied experiment, and in this direction his scope is wider than that of the greatest commercial studio.

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RUSSIAN CLASSICS ON 16 MM

INITIATED last December as a section of the Workers' Theatre Movement, KINO commenced operations by securing the sub-standard rights for all Soviet Films, and proceeded to issue *Potemkin* on 16 mm. non-flam stock. This was hired out to local organizations, to be shown in unlicensed halls and was such a success that it paid for itself in two months. In February *The General Line* was issued and shown in a similar way throughout Britain.

As was to be expected, in view of its not having a Board of Censors' Certificate, there has been a great deal of trouble from the authorities whenever a show of *Potemkin* has come to their knowledge. There is, of course, no law to stop the showing of non-flam films in premises *not* licensed for cinematograph performances, but the L.C.C. (or other Council), together with the Police, often succeed in getting hall proprietors to cancel the bookings. This, although it may cause considerable inconvenience, worry and extra expense to the organisers, rarely has the desired result of preventing anyone from seeing the film. In almost every case, the show has been given either on the same day or else a few days later—generally to a greatly enlarged audience, the extra numbers being due to the free publicity given by the authorities.

For next season it is hoped to have twelve or fourteen films available, including some of KINO'S own shorts. Among these will possibly be :—*October, Storm over Asia, Mother, St. Petersburg, Deserter, Enthusiasm, Earth, Turksib, The Blue Express, Ivan, Golden Mountains, Komsomol, Ghost that Never Returns, and The Road to Life.*

Enquiries should be addressed to KINO, 33 Ormond Yard, London, W.C.1.

NEW PROJECTOR

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